

# HEALING ON THE SABBATH

## *JEW AND GENTILE: FELLOW CITIZENS*

December 8, 2024  
10<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke  
**Revision E**

**Gospel: Luke 13:10-17**  
**Epistle: Ephesians 2:11-22**

Today's Gospel lesson is not used at all in the West.

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### Background: Jesus and the Sabbath Laws

The Mosaic Law concerning the Sabbath was very clear, specific and strict; and the Law had teeth in it. For example:

Mosaic Law	Reference
Complete rest was required.	Exodus 23:12, 31:15, 35:2
One could not even kindle a fire (to cook a meal).	Exodus 35:3
All cooking had to be done the day before.	Exodus 16:23-29
No gathering of wood for the day after the Sabbath was allowed either.	Numbers 15:32-36
This was one of the Ten Commandments.	Exodus 20:9-11, Deuteronomy 5:13-15
The death penalty was prescribed for anyone breaking the Sabbath.	Exodus 31:15, 35:2
One could not carry heavy loads or use pack animals to do so either. The day of rest applied to animals also.	Exodus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:14, Jeremiah 17:21-22
One could not travel on the Sabbath but had to stay in one's place and rest.	Exodus 16:29
Later this traveling restriction was limited to "a Sabbath day's journey" of 2000 cubits <sup>1</sup> (about half a mile).	Acts 1:12
No buying and selling were allowed on the Sabbath. Nehemiah locked the gates of Jerusalem to prevent Gentile vendors from selling on the Sabbath.	Nehemiah 10:31, 13:15-21

These Sabbath rules did not just appear suddenly with Moses. In ancient Babylon, even prior to Abraham, there was a Sabbath observance<sup>2</sup>. It was not as strict as the Sabbath of the

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<sup>1</sup> 2000 cubits is the distance between the Ark and the people as Israel traveled in the desert (Joshua 3:4) and also the limit of the pasturelands outside the Levitical cities (Numbers 35:4-5).

<sup>2</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, p. 939. The origin of the "Sabbath" went back to pre-Semitic days, and the name "Sabbath" is actually of Babylonian origin. This day was described on cuneiform tablets as "a day of rest for the soul". In Accadian times (early Babylonian), the Sabbath was a day on which certain work was forbidden.



Mosaic Law and it was also tied to astrology. Other ancient countries had Sabbath traditions also. Thus, when the Lord commanded the Sabbath observation to remember how He created the world in six days and rested on the seventh (Exodus 31:15-17, 20:9-11), this was probably what other cultures commemorated also.

Tertullian described<sup>3</sup> the gist of the Mosaic Law as having been given in embryo to Adam in the Garden of Eden, and that if Adam and Eve had obeyed it, they would not have fallen. Thus, the Gentiles had the Law prior to Moses. This is reflected in the Sabbath laws of other cultures prior to Moses

But also tied in to the Sabbath observation was a recalling of the time Israel was being “worked to death” in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). Thus, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). This is very apparent from a careful re-reading of the original Sabbath commands where the whole point is complete rest (Exodus 23:12, 31:15-17, 35:2; Deuteronomy 5:14).

The Sabbath was more than just rest, however. It was also a holy day (Exodus 16:23, 20:11, 31:15), and a day of gladness (Numbers 10:10). On this day, the daily offering was doubled (four lambs versus two, see Numbers 28:3-15) and the showbread was set out in the Holy Place (Leviticus 24:8) before the Lord. The Sabbaths were also to be a sign (or omen) between Israel and God “that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them” (Ezekiel 20:12, 20). Thus, there was to be a focus on the things of God and on doing good.

In the true spirit of the Sabbath, Jesus did a number of healings on the Sabbath. For example:

<b>Healing</b>	<b>Reference</b>
The paralytic (4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pascha)	John 5:9
A man with a withered hand	Matthew 12:10, Mark 3:2, Luke 6:7
The man born blind (6 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pascha)	John 9:14
A woman’s hunchback (today’s Gospel)	Luke 13:14
A man with dropsy	Luke 14:3

When the Scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for these things – saying that He was working on the Sabbath – Jesus replied:

The paradoxical aspect of all this confrontation Jesus had with the Jewish leaders over the keeping of the Sabbath is that they thought they were upholding the letter of the Law while Jesus was merely doing good on the Sabbath, which is what the Sabbath was for. And Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:6-8, Mark 2:27-28) for He gave the Sabbath Law to Moses and made the Sabbath for man.

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<sup>3</sup> Tertullian, Answer to the Jews, I, iii, 2.

<b>Work Allowed on the Sabbath</b>	<b>Reference</b>
The priests work on the Sabbath in performing all the sacrifices.	Matthew 12:5
Circumcision is performed on the 8 <sup>th</sup> day, whether that day is a Sabbath or not.	John 7:22
The Jewish leaders will lead their animals to water on the Sabbath.	Luke 13:15
They will also pull their animals out of a hole on the Sabbath.	Luke 14:5
He also challenged them regarding Mosaic Law regulations for or against doing good on the Sabbath.	John 7:23, Mark 3:4, Luke 6:9
The bottom line was: He's Lord of the Sabbath. He's the One who gave the Law to Moses.	Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28, Luke 6:5
Mercy, not sacrifice was to be the spirit of the Sabbath.	Matthew 12:7, Hosea 6:6

John of Damascus stated<sup>4</sup> that the Sabbath rest was made for people who were carnal and worldly. Since they did not devote their whole life to God, the Law bound them, with stiff penalties for disobedience, to devote a small part of their week to distraction from worldly things. Those people who did devote their whole life to God are noted as sometimes “breaking the Sabbath” in doing the Lord’s will.

“The seventh day is called the Sabbath and signifies rest. For in it God rested from all His works, as the divine Scripture says; and so the number of the days goes up to seven and then circles back again and begins at the first. This is the precious number with the Jews. God ordained that it should be held in honor, and that in no chance fashion but with the imposition of most heavy penalties for the transgression. And it was not in a simple fashion that He ordained this, but for certain reasons understood mystically by the spiritual and clear-sighted”.

“God, knowing the denseness of the Israelites and their carnal love and propensity towards material in everything, made this Law: (1) in order that the servant and the cattle should rest as it is written, for the righteous man regards the life of his beast. (2) In order that when they take their ease from the distraction of material things, they may gather together to God, spending the whole of the seventh day in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, the study of the divine Scriptures and resting in God”.

“For when the Law did not exist and there was no divinely inspired Scripture, the Sabbath was not consecrated to God. But when the Scripture was given by Moses, the Sabbath was consecrated to God in order that on it they, who do not dedicate their whole life to God, and who do not make their desire subservient to Him as though to a Father, may on that day discuss the purpose of the Sabbath. Thus they may abstract a small, truly a most insignificant, portion of their life for the service of God, and this from fear of the chastisements and punishments, which threaten transgressors. For the Law is not made for a righteous man but for the unrighteous. Moses was the first to endure fasting with God for forty days and again for another forty. Thus, he afflicted himself with hunger on the Sabbaths, although the Law forbade self-affliction on the Sabbath. But if they should object that this took place before the Law, what will they say about Elijah the Tishbite who accomplished a journey of forty days on one meal?

<sup>4</sup> John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, IV, 23.

For he, by thus afflicting himself on the Sabbaths not only with hunger but also with the forty days' journeying, broke the Sabbath. Yet God, Who gave the Law, was not angry with him but showed Himself to him on Horeb as a reward for his virtue. And what will they say about Daniel? Did he not spend three weeks without food? And again, did not all Israel circumcise the child on the Sabbath, if it happened to be the eighth day after birth? And do they not hold the great fast<sup>5</sup>, which the Law enjoins if it falls on the Sabbath? And further, do not the priests and the Levites profane the Sabbath in the works of the tabernacle and yet are held blameless? If an ox should fall into a pit on the Sabbath, he who pulls it out is blameless, while he who neglects to do so is condemned. And did not all the Israelites surround the walls of Jericho, bearing the Ark of God for seven days, in which the Sabbath was included? The observance of the Sabbath was devised for the purpose of securing leisure to worship God in order that they might, both servant and beast of burden, devote a very small share to Him and be at rest. For the carnal that were still childish and in the bonds of the elements of the world, were unable to conceive of anything beyond the body and the letter”.

### **Gospel: Luke 13:10-17**

The Gospel lesson took place in late 29 AD just before the Feast of the Dedication (i.e. Hanukkah or the Festival of Lights, John 10:22) and probably occurred in Perea on the Eastern side of the Jordan as Jesus was heading toward Jerusalem (Luke 13:22). Jesus had been teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10) and He used the occasion to give an important teaching on the Sabbath itself. There was a woman who had a severe hunchback or spinal injury such that she couldn't straighten her back (Luke 13:11). Jesus remarked that Satan had bound her like this for 18 years (Luke 13:16). This seems very similar to the affliction of the Patriarch Job by Satan, both in the destruction of his family and property (Job 1:9-22) and the destruction of his health (Job 2:4-10). It would seem like all health problems might be traceable to Satan in some way. For more discussion on this, see the Gospel lesson for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke.

Knowing that He would get a reaction, Jesus called the woman over to Him, laid His hands on her and said, “woman, you are loosed from your infirmity” (Luke 13:12). The Synagogue Ruler (equivalent today to the pastor of a church) rebuked Jesus publicly for doing work on the Sabbath (Luke 13:14). The Synagogue Ruler undoubtedly had the backing of the other attendants and council of the synagogue since Jesus' reply addressed a number of people (Luke 13:15). Jesus' reply compared the practice of the Synagogue Ruler and the others in caring for their animals on the Sabbath. The animals needed to be unbound from their stall and led to water; why couldn't a daughter of Abraham also be unbound? (Luke 13:15,16).

Jesus stated His reply very strongly as a confrontation, calling the Synagogue Ruler a hypocrite (Luke 13:15). The result was that the Synagogue Ruler and his attendants were put to shame while the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things done by Jesus (Luke 13:17).

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<sup>5</sup> That is, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-32)

Cyril of Alexandria made<sup>6</sup> three points in commenting on this:

1. God had commanded men to rest on the Sabbath. When Jesus gave rest to the crippled woman freeing her from diseases, and the Synagogue Ruler forbid it, plainly it was the Synagogue Ruler and not Jesus who was breaking the Law of the Sabbath.
2. Jesus did no manual labor in healing the woman. If the Synagogue Ruler wished to forbid labor of the mouth, does this mean that one can't sing Psalms or pray on the Sabbath either?
3. The Synagogue Ruler was not really angry on account of the Sabbath Law being broken, but because he saw Christ honored and worshipped as God. This was concealed in his heart and the Sabbath Law ruse was just a pretext. For this reason, he was most excellently convicted by the Lord and called a hypocrite.

On another occasion about a year and a half earlier (early 28 AD) in Galilee, the Scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for munching on heads of grain that they picked as they walked through the grain fields (Mark 2:23-24). They had interpreted the Sabbath regulations as prohibiting work such as "harvesting grain", even though the Law did not address such minutia as walking and munching.

Later that day in early 28 AD, when Jesus was in the synagogue, they watched Him closely so they would have witnesses against Him if He did any healing on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-2). Knowing this, Jesus asked a man with a withered hand to step forward (Mark 3:3). Addressing the Scribes and Pharisees, He asked them: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent. Looking around, He was grieved by the hardness of their hearts. So Jesus told the man to stretch out his hand and it was restored. The Pharisees then went out and began plotting with the Herodians (their enemies) on how they might destroy Jesus (Mark 3:4-6).

All this represents taking the Sabbath Law to an unmerciful, legalistic extreme. Christ had said, "For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath" speaking of Himself. Referring to our humanity, He said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28, Luke 6:5). John Chrysostom commented<sup>7</sup> as follows:

"Why then was he punished who was gathering sticks? (Numbers 15:32-36) If the laws were to be despised at the beginning, of course they would not be observed afterwards".

"The Sabbath at first conferred many great benefits; for instance, it made them gentle towards those of their household, and humane; it taught them God's providence and the creation; it trained them by degrees to abstain from wickedness, and disposed them to regard the things of the Spirit. Did Christ then repeal a thing so profitable? Far from it; no! He greatly enhanced it. For it was time for them to be trained in all things by the higher rules".

Irenaeus stated<sup>8</sup> that the Jewish leaders, in their desire to uphold their traditions, were unwilling to be subject to the Law of God, which prepared them for the coming of Christ.

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<sup>6</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 97, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

<sup>7</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXIX, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, 12.

“For not only by actual transgression did they set aside the Law of God, but they also set up their own law in opposition to it, which is termed, even to the present day, the pharisaical law. In this law they suppress certain things, add others, and interpret others, as they think proper, which their teachers use, each one in particular. Desiring to uphold these traditions, they were unwilling to be subject to the Law of God, which prepared them for the coming of Christ. They even blamed the Lord for healing on the Sabbath, which the Law did not prohibit. For they themselves, in one sense, performed acts of healing upon the Sabbath, when they circumcised a man on that day. But through tradition and the pharisaical Law, they did not blame themselves for transgressing the command of God, and for not keeping the commandment of the Law, which is the love of God”.

Chrysostom also stated<sup>9</sup> that Jesus had prepared the Jewish leaders for His healing on the Sabbath by driving the moneychangers and merchandisers out of the Temple. In all His doings, He was clarifying to them various aspects of the Law that He had given to Moses.

“Do you see their excessive malice, and how the benefits done to others incensed them more than reproofs? At one time He said that they made the Temple ‘a den of thieves’ (Mark 11:15-19), showing that what they sold was gotten by theft, pillage, and covetousness, and that they were rich through other men’s calamities; at another time, He called it ‘a house of merchandise’ (John 2:13-17), pointing to their shameless trafficking. Why did He do this? Since he was about to heal on the Sabbath, and to do many such things, which they thought were transgressions of the Law, in order that He might not seem to do this as though He had come to be some rival God and opponent of His Father, He took occasion to correct any such suspicion of theirs. One who had exhibited so much zeal for the House was not likely to oppose Him who was Lord of the House, and who was worshipped in it”.

Tertullian noted<sup>10</sup> that there are distinctions of “work” on the Sabbath: God’s work and man’s work. Christ sought to clarify this distinction with the Jewish leaders and included a number of examples. As the “Lord of the Sabbath”, He could have annulled the Sabbath, since it was He that instituted it, but He didn’t since God’s work continues today.

“The Pharisees were in utter error concerning the Law of the Sabbath, not observing that its terms were conditional, when it commanded rest from labor, making certain distinctions of labor. For when it says, ‘In it you shall not do any work of yours’ (Exodus 20:10), by the word *yours*<sup>11</sup> it restricts the prohibition to human work — which everyone performs in his own employment or business — and not to divine work. Now the work of healing or preserving is not proper to man, but to God. So, in the Law it says, ‘You shall not do any manner of work in it’ (Exodus 12:16 LXX), except what is to be done for any soul, that is to say, in the matter of delivering the soul<sup>12</sup>; because what is God’s work may be done for

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<sup>9</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXIII, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Tertullian connects this to the previous verse “all your work”.

<sup>12</sup> That is, saving life.

the salvation of the soul. When Christ wanted to initiate them into this meaning of the Law by the restoration of the withered hand, He asked, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or not? To save life, or to destroy it?’ (Luke 6:9) In order that He might remind them what works the Law of the Sabbath forbids and what it commands, He was called ‘Lord of the Sabbath’ (Luke 6:5), because He maintained the Sabbath as His own institution”.

“Even if He had annulled the Sabbath, He would have had the right to do so, as being its Lord, and as He who instituted it. But He did not utterly destroy it, in order that it might be plain that the Creator did not break the Sabbath, even at the time when the ark was carried around Jericho. That was really God’s work, which He had ordered for the sake of the lives of His servants when exposed to the perils of war”.

“He has in a certain place expressed an aversion of Sabbaths, by calling them *your Sabbaths* (Isaiah 1:13-14 LXX), reckoning them as men’s Sabbaths, not His own, because they were celebrated without the fear of God by a people full of iniquities, and loving God ‘with the lip, not the heart’ (Isaiah 29:13). He put His own Sabbaths (those, that is, which were kept according to His prescription) in a different position. By the same prophet, in a later passage, He declared them to be ‘true, delightful, and inviolable’ (Isaiah 58:13, 56:2). Thus, Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath. He kept the Law, and did a work, which was beneficial to the life of His disciples, for He indulged them with the relief of food when they were hungry (Matthew 14:15-20), and cured the withered hand (Matthew 12:9-14). In each case, He stated, ‘I came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it’ (Matthew 5:17). He fulfilled the Law, while interpreting its condition. Moreover, He exhibited in a clear light the different kinds of work, while doing what the Law excuses from the sacredness of the Sabbath, while imparting to the Sabbath day itself an additional sanctity by His own action. In like manner, the prophet Elisha, on this day, restored to life the dead son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:32-37). It was *proper employment* for the Sabbaths of old to do good, to save life, not to destroy it; Christ introduced nothing new, which was not after the example, the gentleness and the mercy of the Creator. He fulfilled the prophetic announcement, ‘The weak hands are strengthened’, as were also ‘the feeble knees’ (Isaiah 35:3) of the two paralytics” (Mark 2:1-12, John 5:1-9).

Sometime during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, Christians began meeting for worship on Sunday rather than Saturday, which was the traditional Sabbath. This was done to proclaim the Resurrection, which occurred on a Sunday, and also to distance themselves from the unrighteous Jews. The Apostle John refers to this in Revelation 1:10, where Revelation was written in about 95 AD. Ignatius of Antioch (107 AD) refers<sup>13</sup> to the Lord’s Day having replaced the Sabbath as the time for worship. The Didache also refers<sup>14</sup> to the Lord’s Day. Sunday was seen then as comparable to the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles represented the coming of the Kingdom of God in Glory and the eighth day of the feast – a Sabbath – represented the Feast as stretching into eternity. It was on this eighth day – the Great Day – that Jesus stood up and said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the

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<sup>13</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, 9:1.

<sup>14</sup> The Didache, or the Teaching of the Twelve, from the late 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, 14:1.



Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38). Where the living water refers to the Holy Spirit (John 7:39)!

Taking the Sabbath as Christ meant it to be taken in our lives today, we as individuals often need healing on the Sabbath also. Our culture sometimes drives us to be workaholics where working harder or longer gives us the illusion that we will catch up. When demons try to bind us with this treadmill lifestyle, we should remember that the Sabbath Laws brought to mind how Israel was being “worked to death” by slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). We should also remember Jesus’ gentle rebuke to Martha, Lazarus’ sister, who had gotten into a workaholic state serving God: “One thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part (i.e. sitting at Jesus’ feet, hearing His Word) which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41-42).

The Lord used as an example of the spirit of the Sabbath how the priests under the Old Covenant worked on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:5). This was hard work also: killing, gutting, and butchering animals one after another to prepare the peoples’ sacrifices. Yet the priests also had days off to spend time with their families; they didn’t have to work seven days per week. For those of us that have to work on the Lord’s Day, we should follow their example and plan for some time off on other days to devote to Sabbath type activities.

# ***JEW AND GENTILE: FELLOW CITIZENS***

**December 8, 2024**  
**24<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Revision D**

## **Epistle: Ephesians 2:11-22**

### **Background to Ephesians**

Paul wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians from house-arrest in Rome in about 62 AD. He had first met with and reasoned with the Jews of Ephesus in the synagogue there in about 52 AD on his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 18:19). Although Paul did not stay there long in 52 AD (Acts 18:20), he left Aquila (of the Seventy) and his wife Priscilla there and promised to return (Acts 18:18-21). About 53 AD, Paul returned on his Third Missionary Journey and spent two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10). At this time, the church took a direction separate and distinct from the synagogue. Toward the end of his Third Missionary Journey in 57 AD, Paul had a very emotional farewell meeting (Acts 20:37-38) with the elders of the church (Acts 20:17), knowing he may never return.

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Ephesus had had a number of distinguished visitors over the years. The Apostle John and the Virgin Mary had gone there to escape the bloodbath of Herod (Agrippa) trying to please the Jews – which resulted in the martyrdom of James the son of Zebedee and the imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12:1-4). That bloodbath began in 44 AD and ended with the death of Herod soon thereafter (Acts 12:20-23). Apollos, of the Seventy, also was in Ephesus in 53 AD and vigorously refuted the Jews, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 18:24-28).

After the death of the Virgin Mary in the mid 50's AD, the Apostle John returned to Ephesus and worked with a number of churches in that area: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea (Revelation 2, 3). John may have been in the area when Paul wrote his Epistle from Rome. Prochorus, of the Seventy and one of the first seven deacons, accompanied John as did Mary Magdalene for a while. Mary was called “equal to the apostles” in the early Church.

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The Epistle to the Ephesians was meant to be circulated to all the churches in the area and has a general theme of the riches of Christ in the church. It is possible that this Epistle was what was called the “Epistle from Laodicea” (Colossians 4:16) that was being circulated.

### **Jews and Gentiles: Fellow Citizens**

The context of the Epistle lesson speaks about how we were made alive together with Christ, and how He raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:5-6). All this was done in order that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His Grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7). Therefore, we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).

### **Once Gentiles in the Flesh**

Paul said, “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” (Ephesians 2:11-12).

While we were once Gentiles in the flesh (Ephesians 2:11), now we who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13). In another place, Paul refers to the Gentile Christians as the “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16). This was spoken at a time when the Church-synagogue distinction was somewhat blurred<sup>15</sup>. This was spoken even in the Old Testament: Isaiah predicted that Egypt and Assyria will return to the Lord and be blessed (Isaiah 19:21-25).

Justin Martyr commented<sup>16</sup> that this verse (Isaiah 19:24) saying that Israel will be blessed along with Egypt and Assyria. On the other hand, the Lord had told the Jewish leaders that they were *not* children of Abraham because they didn’t do what Abraham did or what God said (John 8:37-44).

“By Isaiah God speaks thus concerning another Israel: ‘In that day shall there be a third Israel among the Assyrians and the Egyptians, blessed in the land which the Lord of Sabaoth has blessed, saying, blessed shall my people in Egypt and in Assyria be, and Israel mine inheritance.’ Since then God blesses this people, and calls them Israel, and declares them to be His inheritance, how is it that you don’t repent of the deception you practice on yourselves, as if you alone were Israel?”

Tertullian of Carthage, in addressing Marcion, stated<sup>17</sup> that Christ was not an adversary of the Law but one who completely promoted it. The same person who made man and gave the Law also created one new man, even though both Jew and Gentile had offended Him.

<sup>15</sup> Until about the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, Christians were considered to be a sect of Judaism. The distinction became much clearer with the Bar Kochba revolt in Jerusalem (132-136 AD); Christians had nothing to do with that.

<sup>16</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 123.

<sup>17</sup> Tertullian, *Five Books Against Marcion*, II, ii, 5, 17.

“Christ has made the Law obsolete by His own precepts, even by Himself fulfilling the Law. For superfluous is, ‘You shall not commit adultery’, when He says, ‘He who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.’ (Matthew 5:27-28). Superfluous also is, ‘You shall not murder’, when He says, ‘Whoever shall be angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment’ (Matthew 5:21-22). It is impossible to make an adversary of the Law out of one who so completely promotes it. Paul said, ‘He created in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace’ (Ephesians 2:15), for He who had made is also the same who creates. ‘For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works’ (Ephesians 2:10). ‘One new man, making peace’; really new, and really man — no phantom — but new, and newly born of a virgin by the Spirit of God. ‘That He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity’ (Ephesians 2:16), even the God whom both races had offended. Thus, we find from Paul, that there was in Christ a fleshly body, such as was able to endure the cross. ‘He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near’, we both obtained ‘access by one Spirit to the Father’. We are ‘no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God’, even of Him from whom we were aliens, and placed far off. We have been ‘built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone’” (Ephesians 2:17-20).

### **Gentiles Once Were Far Off**

Paul said, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13).

Clement of Alexandria stated<sup>18</sup> that the Mosaic Law prohibited Israel from following the idolatry of Egypt and Canaan. This also applies to us in our training in godliness, since we are brought near by the blood of Christ. It gently admonishes us to seek God and endeavor to know Him as far as possible.

“The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘I am the Lord your God. According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I *am* the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the Lord’ (Leviticus 18:1-5). Egypt and the land of Canaan may be the symbol of the world and of deceit, or of sufferings and afflictions. But the oracle shows us what must be abstained from, and what, being divine and not worldly, must be observed. When it is said, ‘The man who does them shall live by them’ (Galatians 3:12), it declares both the correction of the Hebrews themselves, and the training and advancement of us who have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13); it declares at once their life and ours. For ‘we who were dead in trespasses

<sup>18</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, II, 10.

have been made us alive together with Christ' (Ephesians 2:5), by our covenant. For Scripture, by the frequent reiteration of the expression, 'I am the Lord your God', shames in such a way as most powerfully to dissuade, by teaching us to follow God who gave the commandments. It gently admonishes us to seek God and endeavor to know Him as far as possible; which is the highest meditation. It is that which scans the greatest mysteries, the real knowledge, that which cannot be refuted by reason."

John Chrysostom illustrated<sup>19</sup> where the Gentiles had come by contrasting the response to Paul and Barnabas in Lystra with that of the Jews: The Gentiles honored them as gods; the Jews treated them as pests. The Apostles ascribed everything to God, however. Similarly, we should ascribe everything to God; even our Faith itself, which is more God's than ours. Humility is the foundation of all good things. There is nothing worse than an arrogant Christian. It is much better to be humble and to teach by example.

"By their actions the Gentiles in Lystra showed that they were worthy to hear; they so honored Paul and Barnabas from the miracles only. The Gentiles honored them as gods, the Jews persecuted them as pestilent fellows. The Gentiles not only took no offense at the preaching, but said, 'The gods, in the likeness of men, are come down to us; but the Jews were offended'. 'The Gentiles called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercury' (Acts 14:11-12). I suppose Barnabas was a man of dignified appearance also. Here was a new sort of trial, from immoderate zeal, and no small one: but hence also is shown the virtue of the Apostles, and how on all occasions they ascribe all to God. Let us imitate them: let us think nothing our own, seeing even faith itself is not our own, but more God's than ours. 'For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God' (Ephesians 2:8). Let us not think great things of ourselves, nor be puffed up, being as we are, men, dust and ashes, smoke and shadow. Why do we think great things of ourselves? Have we given alms, and lavished our substance? What of that? Think, what if God had chosen not to make us rich? Think of those who are impoverished, or rather, think how many have given not their substance only, but their bodies, and after their numberless sacrifices, have a felt still that they were miserable creatures! You gave for yourself, Christ gave for you; you only paid a debt, Christ didn't owe you. See the uncertainty of the future, and 'Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either' (Romans 11:20-21); do not lessen your virtue by boastfulness. Would you consider doing something truly great? Never let a summary of your attainments as being great enter your mind. Are you a virgin? So were those in the Gospel virgins, but they got no benefit from their virginity, because of their cruelty and inhumanity. (Matthew 25:12). Nothing is like humility; this is mother, root, nurse, foundation, and bond of all good things; without this we are abominable, execrable, and polluted. Suppose there was some man raising the dead, healing the lame, and cleansing the lepers, but with proud self-complacency; there can be nothing more execrable, nothing more impious, nothing more detestable than this. Account nothing to be of yourself. Do you have utterance and grace of teaching? Do not for this

<sup>19</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXX, v. 6.

account yourself to have anything more than other men. For this cause especially, you ought to be humbled, because you have been granted more abundant gifts. For he to whom more was forgiven, will love more (Luke 7:47); if so, then you ought to be humbled also, for God has passed by others, and taken notice of you. Fear also because of this; for often this is a cause of destruction to you if you are not watchful. Why do you think great things of yourself? Because you teach by words? But this is easy, to philosophize in words; teach by the example of your life: that is the best teaching. Do you say that it is right to be moderate, and then make a long speech about this thing, play the orator, pouring forth your eloquence without measure? But one will say to you, 'better than you is he who teaches me this by his deeds'. Those lessons don't get fixed in the mind which consist in words, as those which teach by things. If you don't have deeds, you not only have not profited him by your words but have even hurt him the more; better if you were silent. Why? 'Because the thing you propose to me is impossible: for I consider, that if you who have so much to say about it, don't succeed in this in your own life, much more am I excusable'. For this cause the Prophet says, 'But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth"'? (Psalm 50:16). For this is a worse mischief, when one who teaches well in words, makes a mockery of the teaching by his deeds. This has been the cause of many evils in the Churches."

Chrysostom also pointed out<sup>20</sup> that the main benefit to the Gentiles was in becoming fellow-citizens of the household of God. The Jews had put themselves outside the Commonwealth of Israel because they were unworthy. The expressions that Paul used were most emphatic.

"The benefit bestowed upon the Gentiles consisted in having fellowship with Israel. In essential points Paul enhances it. Further on he says, 'You are fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the household of God' (Ephesians 2:19). Never think that because you happen not to be circumcised, and are now in uncircumcision, that there is any difference. The real trouble was being 'without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel' (Ephesians 2:12), where this circumcision (Jews in the 1<sup>st</sup> century) is not the commonwealth. The being strangers from the covenants of promise, the having no hope to come, the being without God in this world, all these were parts of their condition. He was speaking of heavenly things; he speaks also of those which are on earth; since the Jews had a great opinion of these. In comforting His disciples, Christ said, 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Then He added the lesser point of consolation, 'for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you' (Matthew 5:10-12). Compared with the greatness of the commonwealth of Israel, this is far less, yet in regard to the being near, and believing, it is great and sufficient, and has much force. This was the sharing in the commonwealth. His word is not, 'separated', but 'alienated from the commonwealth' (Ephesians 2:12). His word is not, 'you took no interest in', but, 'you had not so much as any part in, and were strangers'. The expressions are most emphatic, and indicate the separation to be very wide. The

<sup>20</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, V, v. 11-12

Israelites themselves were outside this commonwealth, not as aliens, but as indifferent to it; they fell from the covenants, not as strangers, but as unworthy.”

John Chrysostom states<sup>21</sup> that this does not mean that God has raised the Gentiles to the high heritage of the Jews, which includes the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the service of God and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom Christ came (Romans 9:4-5). Nor does it mean that the Gentiles have replaced the Jews. Rather, it means that He has raised both us and them to a heritage yet higher.

“What is this, ‘both one?’ He does not mean that He hath raised us to that high heritage of the Jews, but that he has raised both us and them to one yet higher. Only that the blessing to us is greater, because to these it had been promised, and they were nearer than we; to us it had not been promised, and we were farther off than they. Therefore, it is that he says, ‘And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy’ (Romans 15:9). The promise indeed He gave to Israel, but they were unworthy; to us He gave no promise, we were even strangers, we had nothing in common with them. Yet He has made us one, not by knitting us to them, but by knitting both them and us together into one. I will give you an illustration. Let us suppose there are two statues, the one of silver, the other of lead, and then that both shall be melted down, and that the two shall come out gold. Behold, thus hath He made the two one. Or put the case again in another way. Let the two be, one a slave, the other an adopted son. Let both offend Him, the one as a disinherited child, the other as a fugitive, and one who never knew a father. Then let both be made heirs, both trueborn sons. Behold, they are exalted to one and the same dignity, the two have become one, the one coming from a longer, the other from a nearer distance, and the slave becoming more noble than he was before he offended.

### **Christ Has Broken Down the Middle Wall**

Paul said, “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” (Ephesians 2:14-15)

The middle wall of separation (Ephesians 2:14) could possibly refer to the tearing at Jesus’ crucifixion of the thick embroidered veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. In the context of this discussion – Jew vs. Gentile – more probably it refers to the Court of the Gentiles as compared to the Inner Court which only Jews could enter. Herod’s Temple (construction began in 19 BC) was more elaborate than the First Temple and had several courts. The outermost was called “the Court of the Gentiles” and was the closest unclean individuals could come. Just inside that was “the Court of the Women”, and inside that was “the Court of the Israelites.” Regarding walls, there was the outer wall (of the Court of the Gentiles), the middle wall (separating the Outer Court from the Inner Court), and the inner wall of the Temple itself.

<sup>21</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, V, vv. 13-15.

There are two aspects to the “middle wall of separation.” One is the separation of Gentile from Jew. This separation was necessary because the Gentiles did not keep the Mosaic Law; approaching a Holy God in uncleanness would prove fatal to them.

John Chrysostom wrote<sup>22</sup> of the middle wall as being a hedge that turned into enmity because of our disobedience. The Law was given as a hedge of security and an enclosure. “I made a hedge around it, and dug a trench, and planted a choice vine (Isaiah 5:2 LXX). “Why have you broken its hedges, so that all who pass that way may pick its fruit?” (Psalm 80:2). “I will take away its hedge and it will be for spoil. I will pull down its walls and it will be left to be trampled down” (Isaiah 5:5 LXX). The Law became a middle wall, no longer establishing them in security, but cutting them off from God.

With the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, He replaced the Old Covenant (Mosaic Law with all its details) with the New Covenant that is written on hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Thus (Ephesians 2:15) He abolished the enmity; that is the commandments in ordinances restricting both Jews and Gentiles to certain places, certain rituals and limited access to God. Instead He created in Himself one new man from the two.

While the words used here speak just of the wall between Jew and Gentile, the same applies to barriers between races, between people of various social positions, and between sexes (Galatians 3:28). Paul says: “for you are all one in Christ.” The Lord clarified this by a question put to Him by the Sadducees, who didn’t believe in a resurrection of the body. According to the Mosaic Law, if a man died childless, the man’s brother was obliged to marry his brother’s widow and raise up children for his brother. The Sadducees asked Jesus whose wife would the widow be in the resurrection if seven brothers all had married the oldest brother’s widow in succession. Jesus’ answer was that “in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:23-30). In this life, we all have roles to play based on what we’ve been given; but that will change in the resurrection.

Irenaeus of Lyons stated<sup>23</sup> that a key aspect of Christ’s reconciliation is that He had the same flesh as ours. If this was not the case, the reconciliation would not have been possible. In every Epistle, Paul plainly testifies that we have been saved through Christ’s flesh and blood.

“If anyone alleges that the flesh of the Lord was different from ours, because it did not commit sin, while we, on the other hand, are sinners, he says what is the fact. But if he pretends that the Lord possessed another substance of flesh, the sayings respecting reconciliation will not agree. For that thing is reconciled which had formerly been in enmity. Now, if the Lord had taken flesh from another substance, He would not, by so doing, have reconciled that one to God which had become enemies through transgression. But now, by means of communion with Himself, the Lord has reconciled man to God the Father, in reconciling us to Himself by the body of His own flesh, and redeeming us by His own blood. ‘In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace’ (Ephesians 1:7). Again, he says, ‘You who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ’ (Ephesians

<sup>22</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, V, vv. 13-15.

<sup>23</sup> Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V, xiv, 3.



2:13). And again, ‘Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the Law of commandments contained in ordinances’ (Ephesians 2:15). In every Epistle Paul plainly testifies, that through the flesh of our Lord, and through His blood, we have been saved.”

John Chrysostom stated<sup>24</sup> that peace with God means sinning no more and no longer going back to our former way of life. Some said, “How is it possible to sin no more?” If we were freed from all our sins by Christ on the Cross, much more shall we be able through Him to remain sinless. If He reconciled us when we were in open war with Him, it is reasonable that we should remain in a state of reconciliation. In all this, there is His part versus our part.

“What does ‘we have peace with God’ (Romans 5:1) mean? Some say, ‘Let us not be in dissension, through a peevish obstinacy for bringing in the Law’. But to me he seems to be speaking about grace. For after having said much on the subject of faith, Paul had set faith before righteousness which is by works, to prevent anyone from supposing what he said was a ground for listlessness. He says, ‘we have peace with God’; that is, let us sin no more, nor go back to our former way of life. For this is making war with God. One might say, ‘how is it possible to sin no more?’ For if when liable for so many sins we were freed from all by Christ, much more shall we be able through Him to remain sinless. For it is not the same thing to receive peace when there had been none, and to keep it when it has been given, since to acquire surely is harder than to keep. Yet nevertheless the more difficult has been made easy, and carried into effect. That which is the easier thing then will be what we shall easily succeed in, if we cling to Him who has wrought even the other for us. But here it is not the easiness only which he seems to me to hint at, but the reasonableness. For if He reconciled us when we were in open war with Him, it is reasonable that we should remain in a state of reconciliation. This means that we will give Him this reward that He may not seem to have reconciled unfeeling creatures to the Father.”

“Paul continued, ‘through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God’ (Romans 5:2). If then He has brought us near to Himself, when we were far off, much more will He keep us now that we are near. And let me beg you to consider how everywhere Paul sets down these two points: His part, and our part. On His part, however, there are things varied, numerous and diverse. For He died for us, further reconciled us, brought us to Himself, and gave us grace unspeakable. But we brought faith only as our contribution. And so, he says, ‘by faith, into this grace’. What grace is this? It is the being counted worthy of the knowledge of God, the being forced from error, the coming to a knowledge of the Truth, the obtaining of all the blessings that come through Baptism. For the object of His bringing us near was that we might receive these gifts.”

## **Christ Created One New Man**

<sup>24</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, IX, v. 5:1

Paul said, “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” (Ephesians 2:14-15)

John Chrysostom stated<sup>25</sup> that Christ did not just turn Gentiles into Jews, but He created a whole new thing. This is no less a creation than was done at the beginning.

“Paul said that Christ ‘abolished in His flesh the enmity, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace’ (Ephesians 2:15). Notice that it is not that the Gentile becomes a Jew, but that both the Jew and the Gentile are entered into another condition. It was not with a view of merely making the Gentile other than he was, but rather, in order to create the two anew. And well does he on all occasions employ the word ‘create’, and does not say ‘change’, in order to point out the power of what was done. Even though the creation is invisible, yet it is no less a creation than He did in the beginning; we ought not abandon this, as from natural things.”

Athanasius of Alexandria stated<sup>26</sup> that when the Scripture says that God created one new man, He does not mean that He created the essence of a creature. It means that He is referring to the renewal of salvation among men.

“To be called creatures and to be created, belongs to things which have by nature a created essence. Scripture is full of places that are sufficient to remind us. On the other hand, the single word ‘He created’ does not only denote the essence and mode of generation. David shows this, ‘Let this be written for another generation; and the people that shall be created shall praise the Lord’ (Psalm 102:18 LXX). Again, ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit in my inward parts’ (Psalm 51:10 LXX). Paul says, ‘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’ (Ephesians 2:15). Again, ‘Put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness’ (Ephesians 4:24). David spoke of no other people created in essence, nor prayed to have another heart than what he had; he meant renovation according to God and renewal. Paul did not signify two persons created in essence in the Lord, nor did he counsel us to put on any other man. He called the life according to virtue the ‘man after God,’ and by the ‘created’ in Christ he meant the two people who are renewed in Him. Such too is the language of Jeremiah; ‘The Lord created safety for a new planting, men will travel about in security’ (Jeremiah 31:22 LXX). In thus speaking, he does not mean any essence of a creature, but prophesies the renewal of salvation among men, which has taken place in Christ for us. Such is the difference between ‘the creatures’ and the single word ‘He created’”.

<sup>25</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, V, vv. 13-15

<sup>26</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses Against the Arians, II, xix, 46.

John Chrysostom pointed out<sup>27</sup> that there were two events associated with creation out of nothing. The first was the Creation described in Genesis; the second was the result of Christ's Resurrection, where He created in Himself one new man.

“Paul mentioned what is the greatest token of divinity; ‘of Whom are all things’ (1 Corinthians 8:6). For this implies that those others are not gods. For it is said, ‘The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens’ (Jeremiah 10:11). Then he adds what is not less than this, ‘and we for Him’ (1 Corinthians 8:6). For when Paul said, ‘of Whom are all things’, he means the creation and the bringing of things out of nothing into existence. But when he said, ‘and we for Him’, he speaks of the word of faith and mutual appropriation. Paul said this before, ‘But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God’ (1 Corinthians 1:30). In two ways we are of Him, (1) by being made when we were not, and (2) by being made believers. For this also is a creation: a thing which Paul also declares elsewhere; ‘so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace” (Ephesians 2:15).

““And one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *are* all things, and through whom we *live*’ (1 Corinthians 8:6). With regard to Christ again, we must conceive of this in like manner. For through Him the race of men was both produced out of nothing into existence, and returned from error to truth. So that the phrase ‘of Whom’, is not to be understood apart from Christ. For of Him, through Christ, we were created.”

Gregory of Nyssa stated<sup>28</sup> that our nature no longer preserved the impress of the Father's image, but was transformed into the foul likeness of sin. We had been outlawed by our own depravity and were shepherded by the father of sin. Christ, Who knew no sin, was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Having become what we were, He, through Himself again, united humanity to God. He, Who for our sakes was partaker of flesh and blood, has recovered us, and brought us back to the place from which we strayed.

“Human nature did not enter into creation from any other source, nor grow spontaneously in the parents of the race, but it too had for the author of its own constitution none other than the Father of all. The name of Godhead itself, whether it indicates the authority of oversight or of foresight, imports a certain relation to humanity. For He Who bestowed on all things that are, the power of being, is the God and overseer of what He has Himself produced. However, by the wiles of him that sowed in us the tares of disobedience, our nature no longer preserved in itself the impress of the Father's image. Instead it was transformed into the foul likeness of sin; for this cause, it was engrafted by virtue of similarity of will into the evil family of the father of sin. The good and true God and Father was no longer the God and Father of him who had been thus outlawed by his own depravity. Instead of Him Who was by Nature God, those were honored which, as Paul says, ‘by nature are not gods’ (Galatians 4:8), and in the place of the Father, he was deemed father who is falsely so called. As Jeremiah says in his dark saying, ‘The partridge utters her voice, she gathers eggs which she did not

<sup>27</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XX, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius, XII, 1.

lay; *so is a man* gaining his wealth unjustly; in the midst of his days *his riches* shall leave him, and at his latter end he will be a fool' (Jeremiah 17:11 LXX). The sum of our calamity was that humanity was exiled from the good Father, and was banished from the Divine oversight and care. For this cause, He Who is the Shepherd of the whole rational creation, left in the heights of heaven His sinless flock, and, moved by love, went after the sheep which had gone astray, even our human nature. For human nature, which alone through vice roamed away from the hundred rational beings, is, if it be compared with the whole, but an insignificant and infinitesimal part. Since then it was impossible that our life, which had been estranged from God, should of itself return to the high and heavenly place, He Who knew no sin is made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21), and frees us from the curse by taking on Him our curse as His own (Galatians 3:13). He took up, and, in the language of Paul, 'slandered' in Himself 'the enmity' which by means of sin had come between us and God. In fact, sin was 'the enmity' (Ephesians 2:16); and having become what we were, He, through Himself again, united humanity to God. By purity He brought into closest relationship with the Father of our nature that new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24), in Whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9). He drew with Him into the same grace all the nature that partakes of His body and is akin to Him. And these glad tidings He proclaims through the woman, not to those disciples only, but also to all who up to the present day become disciples of the Word. Man is no longer outlawed, nor cast out of the kingdom of God, but is once more a son, once more in the station assigned to him by his God. For if the first fruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; and if the root *is* holy, so *are* the branches (Romans 11:16). 'For behold, here am I and the children whom God has given Me' (Hebrews 2:13, Isaiah 8:18). He Who for our sakes was partaker of flesh and blood has recovered us, and brought us back to the place from which we strayed, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14). He from Whom we were formerly alienated by our revolt has become our Father and our God."

Athanasius of Alexandria pointed out<sup>29</sup> that Christ was not flesh in the beginning, and was not so until He was born of Mary. In the flesh, He reconciled the enmity which was against us. Yet that which the Father has, also belongs to the Son.

"We understand all things to have been delivered to the Savior, and, if it is necessary to follow up understanding by explanation, that has been delivered to Him which He did not previously possess. For He was not man previously, but became man for the sake of saving man. The Word was not in the beginning flesh, but has been made flesh subsequently (John 1:1-14). In which Flesh, as Paul says, He reconciled the enmity which was against us (Colossians 1:20, 2:14, Ephesians 2:15, 16). He destroyed the Law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might make the two into one new man, making peace, and reconcile both in one body to the Father. That, however, which the Father has, belongs also to the Son, as also He says in John, 'All things that the Father has are Mine' (John

<sup>29</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, On Luke 10:22, 3.

16:15), expressions which could not be improved. For when He became that which He was not, ‘all things were delivered’ to Him. But when He desires to declare His unity with the Father, He teaches it without any reserve, saying: ‘All things whatever the Father has are Mine.’”

Just creating one new man wasn’t enough, however. A second aspect of “the middle wall of separation” is that His death and resurrection was also necessary in order to reconcile both Jew and Gentile in one body to God the Father (Ephesians 2:16). Chrysostom stated<sup>30</sup> that Christ became a Jew by circumcision (Luke 2:21); but by becoming accursed (Galatians 3:13, Deuteronomy 21:23), He became a Gentile outside the Law. And the word “reconcile” (Ephesians 2:16) implies a reconciling thoroughly; that is, it is a strengthened reconciliation that hints at a restoration to a primal unity.

### **Christ Reconciled Both to God**

Paul said, “He created 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 2:15-16).

Athanasius of Alexandria pointed out<sup>31</sup> some of Paul’s words that may not be immediately apparent. In addressing the Arians, who say that Christ is not God, He became sin for us and a curse, though not having sinned Himself, but because He Himself bore our sins and our curse, so, He created us in Him. The point is that if Christ were a creature, as the Arians claimed, then He was not created for us, and we are not created in Him; and, if not created in Him, we have Him not in ourselves but externally, like receiving instruction from a teacher. If this is the case, then sin has not lost its reign over the flesh, being inherent in it and not cast out of it.

“John says, ‘For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved’ (John 3:17). And again, the Savior has spoken in His own person, ‘For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind’ (John 9:39). Not for Himself then, but for our salvation, and to abolish death, and to condemn sin, and to give sight to the blind, and to raise up all from the dead, has He come; but if not for Himself, but for us, by consequence not for Himself but for us is He created. But if not for Himself is He created, but for us, then He is not Himself a creature, but, as having put on our flesh, He uses such language. And that this is the sense of the Scriptures, we may learn from Paul, who says in Ephesians, ‘Having 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’ (Ephesians 2:14-15). But if in Him the two are created, and these are in His body, reasonably then, bearing the two in Himself, He is as if Himself created; for those who were created in Himself He made one, and He was in them, as they. And thus, the two being created in Him, He may say suitably,

<sup>30</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, V, vv. 13-15.

<sup>31</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses Against the Arians, II, xx, 55-56.

‘The Lord created me.’ For as by receiving our infirmities, He is said to be infirm Himself, though not Himself infirm, for He is the Power of God, and He became sin for us and a curse, though not having sinned Himself, but because He Himself bore our sins and our curse, so, by creating us in Him, let Him say, He created me for the works,’ though not Himself a creature.”

“For if, as they hold, the Essence of the Word being of created nature, therefore He says, ‘The Lord created me,’ being a creature, He was not created for us; but if He was not created for us, we are not created in Him; and, if not created in Him, we have Him not in ourselves but externally; as, for instance, as receiving instruction from Him as from a teacher. And it being so with us, sin has not lost its reign over the flesh, being inherent and not cast out of it. But Paul opposes such a doctrine a little before, when he says, ‘For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works’ (Ephesians 2:10); and if in Christ we are created, then it is not He who is created, but we in Him; and thus the words ‘He created’ are for our sake. For because of our need, the Word, though being Creator, endured words which are used of creatures; which are not proper to Him, as being the Word, but are ours who are created in Him.”

What happens, then, asks Chrysostom<sup>32</sup>, when God tries to reconcile us, but we fall back into enmity? Only hell awaits this! This is the “mind of the flesh” (Ephesians 2:3). Since Christ had abolished the enmity in His flesh, where the enmity is “the Law of the commandments in decrees” (Ephesians 2:15), to return to the “enmity” is to deny the benefit of the death of Christ.

“Think then, how vast an evil is it, when God has employed so many methods to reconcile us, and has affected it, that we should again fall back into enmity! This enmity no fresh Baptism, but hell itself awaits; no fresh remission, but searching trial. The mind of the flesh is luxury and indolence, covetousness and all kinds of sin. Why is it said the mind of the flesh, while the flesh could do nothing without the soul? Paul does not say this to the disparagement of the flesh, any more than when he says the ‘natural man’ (1 Corinthians 2:14); he doesn’t use that expression to the disparagement of the soul. Neither body nor soul in itself, if it doesn’t receive the impulse which is from above, is able to achieve anything great or noble.”

In this context there is the fleshly man, the natural man (referring to the soul, 1 Corinthians 2:14) and the spiritual man. “The virtue of the flesh is her subjection to the soul. It is her vice to govern the soul. The horse may be good and nimble, but when the horse gets the mastery over the charioteer, she produces ten thousand mischiefs.” The same is true about the Spirit governing the soul. “The soul, while dwelling in the body, makes it beautiful; but when she leaves it destitute of her own native energy and departs, the greatest loathsomeness ensues (i.e. death). So also, it is when the Spirit forsakes the soul (and the body); the loathsomeness which results is worse and greater.”

Chrysostom also stated<sup>33</sup> that the flesh of itself is neither good nor evil. As soon as the body has deprived itself of reason and of the supremacy of the soul, then it goes wrong;

<sup>32</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, V, Moral.

<sup>33</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, V, Moral.

similarly, the soul without the Spirit. This is why it is the Lord's intent that the Spirit should direct both body and soul in the Body of Christ.

“Luxury is not due to the necessity of the body, but rather of the inattentiveness of the soul; for food, not feasting, is the object of the necessity of the body. If I have a mind to put on a strong curb, I stop the horse; but the body is unable to check the soul in her evil courses. Why does Paul call it the carnal mind? Because it comes to be wholly of the flesh, for when the flesh has the mastery, then she goes wrong, as soon as she has deprived herself of reason, and of the supremacy of the soul. The virtue therefore of the body consists in this, in its submission to the soul, since of itself the flesh is neither good nor evil. For what could the body ever do of itself? It is then by its connection to the soul that the body is good, good because of its subjection, with capacity, both for one and for the other, and having an equal tendency either way. The body has a natural desire, not of fornication, nor of adultery, but of pleasure; the body has a desire not of feasting, but of food; not of drunkenness, but of drink. For in proof that it is not drunkenness that is the natural desire of the body, notice how, whenever you exceed the measure, when you go beyond the boundary-lines, it cannot hold out any longer. Up to this point it is of the body, but all the rest of the excesses; e.g., when the body is hurried away into sensualities, when she becomes stupefied, these are of the soul. For though the body is good, still it is vastly inferior to the soul, as lead is of less value than gold; yet gold needs lead to solder it, and just so the soul needs the body. In the same way a noble child requires a conductor; so does the soul need the body.”

### **Peace to All and Access to the Father**

Paul said, “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” (Ephesians 2:17-18).

John Chrysostom stated<sup>34</sup> that Christ has made peace between all people. Not the Gentiles less, and the Jews more, but all by one and the same grace. The wrath He appeased by His death and has made us fit for the Father's love through the Spirit. No longer are we strangers from the saints, or foreigners. For they who shall not attain to heavenly blessings, are foreigners.

“Paul said, ‘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’ (Ephesians 2:17-18). He has reconciled us! For the Lord Himself also said, ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you’ (John 14:27). And again, ‘Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world’ (John 16:33). And again, ‘If you ask anything in My name, I will do it’ (John 14:14). And again, ‘For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me’ (John 16:27). These are so many evidences of peace. But how towards the Gentiles? ‘For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father’, not the Gentiles less, and the Jews more, but all by one and the same grace. The wrath He appeased by His death and has made us fit for the Father's

<sup>34</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, VI, v. 17

love through the Spirit. Notice again, the ‘in one Spirit’ means ‘by’ or ‘through’. By Himself and the Spirit that is, He has brought us to the Father. ‘Therefore, we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints’” (Ephesians 2:19).

“Do you perceive that it is not with the Jews simply, but with those saintly and great men, such as Abraham, Moses and Elijah? It is for the same city with these that we are enrolled, for that, we declare ourselves. ‘For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland’ (Hebrews 11:14). No longer are we strangers from the saints, or foreigners. For they who shall not attain to heavenly blessings, are foreigners. ‘For a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever’” (John 8:35).

“‘We are members of the household of God’ (Ephesians 2:19). The very thing which they at the first had, by means of so many toils and troubles, has been for you accomplished by the grace of God. Behold the hope of your calling.”

Chrysostom also stated<sup>35</sup> that the one body and one Spirit of Christians doesn’t apply if one is friends with heretics. This may result in one body but not one spirit. We are all equal before God in the Body of Christ, so there is no point in being high-minded.

“This is that love which produces great and glorious fruits. Paul said, ‘There is one body’ (Ephesians 4:4); one, both by sympathy, by not opposing the good of others, and by sharing their joy. He then beautifully adds, ‘and one Spirit’, showing that from the one body there will be one Spirit. It is possible that there may be indeed one body, and yet not one Spirit; for instance, if any member of it should be a friend of heretics. By this expression, he may be shaming them into unanimity, saying, ‘You who have received one Spirit, and have been made to drink at one fountain (John 4:14), ought not to be divided in mind’. Then he adds, ‘Just as you were called in one hope of your calling’ (Ephesians 4:4), that is, God has called you all on the same terms. He has bestowed nothing upon one more than upon another. To all He has freely given immortality, to all eternal life, to all immortal glory, to all brotherhood, to all inheritance. He is the common Head of all; ‘When we were dead in trespasses, He has made us alive together with Christ, and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus’ (Ephesians 2:5-6). You then who in the spiritual world have so great equality of privileges, why is it that you are high-minded? Is it that one is wealthy and another strong? How ridiculous must this be? Tell me, if the emperor someday were to take ten persons, and to array them all in purple, seat them on the royal throne, and to bestow upon all the same honor, would any one of these venture to reproach another, as being wealthier or more illustrious than he? Never! And the difference is not so great in heaven as we differ here below. There is ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism’ (Ephesians 4:5). Behold ‘the hope of your calling. One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all’ (Ephesians 4:6). Can it be, that you are called by the name of a greater God and another is called by the name of a lesser God? That you are saved by faith, and another is saved by works? That you have received remission in baptism, while another has not? ‘Who is over all’, that is, the Lord; and above all and

<sup>35</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XI, vv. 4-7.



‘through all’, that is, providing for, ordering all; and ‘in you all’, that is, who dwells in you all. Now this is an attribute of the Son.”

### **A Holy Temple in the Lord**

Paul said, “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 joined 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” (Ephesians 2:19-22)

Basil the Great stated<sup>36</sup> that we have received the grace of God from the Father and Christ has brought us to the Father through Himself, making us members of the household of God. **Noting His benefits** is a proper argument for glorifying Him. Scripture does not give us just one Name to describe the Lord, however. At various places, He is Shepherd, King, Physician, Bridegroom, the Way, Door, Fountain, Bread, Axe and Rock.

John Chrysostom stated<sup>37</sup> that the purpose of the reconciling is that each of us severally is a Temple and all of us together are a Temple. One cannot otherwise have a place in it, unless by living with great exactness. The object of this building is that God may dwell in this temple. He dwells in us as in the body of Christ, and as in a Spiritual temple.

“Notice how Paul knits it all together, and represents Him at one time, holding down the whole body from above, and welding it together. At another time, He supported the building from below, and being a root, or base. Whereas Paul had used the expression, ‘He created in Himself from the two one new man’ (Ephesians 2:15) by this Paul clearly shows us, that by Himself Christ knits together the two. Again, in Him it was created, since ‘He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation’ (Colossians 1:15), that is, He Himself supports all things.”

“‘In whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord’ (Ephesians 2:21-22). Whether you speak of the roof, or of the walls, or of any other part whatever, He supports the whole. Paul elsewhere calls Him a foundation. ‘For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ’ (1 Corinthians 3:11). ‘In whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord’ (Ephesians 2:21). Here he displays the perfection of it and indicates that one cannot otherwise have a place in it, unless by living with great exactness. ‘It 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’ (Ephesians 2:21-22). He is speaking continuously: ‘Into a holy temple, for a habitation of God in the Spirit’. What then is the object of this building? It is that God may dwell in this temple. For each of you severally is a temple, and

<sup>36</sup> Basil the Great, On the Spirit, VIII, 17.

<sup>37</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, VI, v. 17.

all of you together are a temple. And He dwelleth in you as in the body of Christ, and as in a Spiritual temple. Paul does not use the word which means our coming to God, but which implies God's bringing us to Himself, for we did not come of ourselves, but we were brought by Him. 'No one comes to the Father except through Me'. And again, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

This was a mystery which had been hidden in God from the beginning of the ages (Ephesians 3:9). And as this mystery unfolds, the manifold wisdom of God is revealed by the Church to the principalities and powers (two ranks of angels) in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10). Paul was extremely appreciative of the gift of the Grace of God given to him that he should be able to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of this mystery (Ephesians 3:7-8). And we can be likewise appreciative that we can participate also.

Athanasius of Alexandria described<sup>38</sup> what it was like for Paul to be a fellow-citizen and member of the household of God. He was gifted with every virtue, borne to Paradise and was known to the saints that dwell there. Yet he still knew only in part; however he was perfect regarding those that were entrusted to him. Apostolic grace was committed to him and he had hope for the future through his tribulations.

"Paul, being gifted with every virtue, and called faithful of the Lord cleaved to these virtues more and more, and was carried up even to heavenly places, and was borne to Paradise (2 Corinthians 12:4). Paul knew nothing against himself, yet he was not justified by this; but He who judges him is the Lord (1 Corinthians 4:4), and what was in harmony with love and godliness. As he surpassed the conversation of men, he was exalted above men. When he returned from Paradise he preached to every man, 'We know in part, and we prophesy in part. Now I know in part; but then I shall know just as I also am known' (1 Corinthians 13:9-12). Paul was known to those saints who are in heaven, as their fellow-citizen and members of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). Regarding all that is future and perfect, the things known by him here were in part; but with respect to those things which were committed and entrusted to him by the Lord, he was perfect. As he said, 'I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, let us, as many as are perfect, have this in mind' (Philippians 3:14-15). The Gospel of Christ is the fulfillment and accomplishment of the ministration which was supplied by the Law of Israel. Future things will be the accomplishment of such as now exist, the Gospel being then fulfilled, and the faithful receiving those things which, not seeing now, they yet hope for. As Paul said, 'For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance' (Romans 8:24-25). Paul was of such a character, that Apostolic grace was committed to him; he wrote, wishing 'that all men were even as I myself' (1 Corinthians 7:7). For virtue is philanthropic, and great is the company of the kingdom of heaven; for thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads there serve the Lord. Though a man enters it through a straight and narrow way, yet having entered, he beholds immeasurable space, and a place greater than any

<sup>38</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, XI, 1.

other, as they declare, who were eye-witnesses and heirs of these things. ‘You brought us into the snare; You laid afflictions on our back’ (Psalm 66:11 LXX). But afterwards, having related their afflictions, they say, ‘You have set my feet in a wide place’ (Psalm 31:8); and again, ‘You have made room for me in tribulation’” (Psalm 4:1 LXX).

Basil the Great stated<sup>39</sup> that we have received the grace of God from the Father and Christ has brought us to the Father through Himself, making us members of the household of God. The reciting of His benefits is a proper argument for glorifying Him. Scripture does not give us just one Name to describe the Lord, however. At various places, He is Shepherd, King, Physician, Bridegroom, the Way, Door, Fountain, Bread, Axe and Rock.

“Paul said, ‘I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all’ (Romans 1:8), and again ‘Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name’ (Romans 1:5). Paul continued, ‘through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God,’” (Romans 5:2). Paul sets forth the boons conferred on us by the Son, at one time making the grace of the good gifts pass through from the Father to us, and at another bringing us to the Father through Himself. By saying ‘Through Him we have received grace and apostleship’, Paul declares the supply of the good gifts to proceed from that source. In saying ‘through whom also we have access by faith’, Paul sets forth our acceptance and being made ‘members of the household of God’ through Christ (Ephesians 2:19). Is then the confession of the grace wrought by Him to us a detraction from His glory? Is it not truer to say that the recital of His benefits is a proper argument for glorifying Him? It is on this account that we have not found Scripture describing the Lord to us by one name, nor even by such terms alone as are indicative of His godhead and majesty. At one time it uses terms descriptive of His nature, for it recognizes the ‘Name which is above every name’ (Philippians 2:9) the name of Son, and speaks of true Son (Matthew 14:33; 27:54). It also describes Him as only begotten God (John 1:18), Power of God (Romans 1:16), Wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:24), and Word (John 1:1, Psalm 107:20, Wisdom 9:1). On account of the diverse manners (Hebrews 1:1) wherein grace is given to us, which, because of the riches of His goodness (Romans 2:4), according to his manifold wisdom (Ephesians 3:10), he bestows things on us. Scripture designates Him by other titles, calling Him Shepherd (John 10:12), King (Matthew 21:5), Physician (Matthew 9:12), Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15), and Way (John 14:6). Also, Scripture calls Him Door (John 10:9), Fountain (Revelation 21:6), Bread (John 6:35), Axe (Matthew 3:10), and Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4). These titles do not set forth His nature, but the variety of the effectual working which, out of His tender-heartedness to His own creation, according to the peculiar necessity of each, He bestows upon them that need. Those that have fled for refuge to His ruling care, and through patient endurance have mended their wayward ways, He calls ‘sheep’ (John 10:3-5). He confesses Himself to be, to them that hear His voice and refuse to give heed to strange teaching, a ‘shepherd’. For ‘My sheep hear my voice’” (John 10:27).

<sup>39</sup> Basil the Great, On the Spirit, VIII, 17.

Paul compared the Grace given to the Gentiles to a wild olive branch that was grafted in to the root and richness of a cultivated olive tree, where some of its branches were broken off (Romans 11:16-25). This should cause us to be humble because:

- We do not support the root; the root supports us (Ephesians 2:18).
- If God did not spare the natural branches, He won't spare us either (Ephesians 2:21).
- When the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, the natural branches can and will be grafted back in (Ephesians 2:24-25).