

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...”

—EPHESIANS 2:14

Paul’s great dilemma in establishing the early church was one of disunity between the Jews and Gentiles, but for reasons that were centuries old. The Jewish people had the covenants of the promise, the patriarchs, the law, the temple worship and the divine glory as children of God. They had hope, and they had God, but in contrast, the Gentiles were without any of this. Paul uses debilitating words to describe their condition: foreigners, aliens, separated, excluded, without God, without hope.

The Jews and Gentiles were very different, and their differences had become divisions. Their differences were of God, and are excusable, but the divisions were not of God, and are inexcusable. The purpose of the Jewish nation was that they would bless the world and, therefore, their presence would enrich the Gentiles. Instead, they became elite and arrogant, but as sons and daughters of God, they could always rationalize their standing.

In society today, particularly in the western world, Jew or Gentile heritage is no longer a problem, but there are general principles in this controversy that apply to many areas of our lives. There are legitimate differences which have become illegitimate divisions. Prejudices exist against gender, age, race, culture, and even abilities we have, but we cannot think one person or group more superior to another. That creates divisions and divisions become destructive.

Paul's purpose in his letter to the Ephesians is to establish unity and reconciliation between the divisions. "His purpose was that in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility" (Ephesians 2:15-16). As this reconciliation is in Christ, and we are made one through the cross of Christ, then the division and fragmentation is, at root, a spiritual issue, which can only be rectified when it begins at the cross of Christ, through the blood of Christ, and being put in Christ.

The true ingredient of uniting us together is the presence of God, and we need to get right with Him first, before we can get right with others. If we see it as a triangle and at the apex is God with oppositions on either side, perhaps a husband on one side and wife on the other, it is as we climb closer to God, we become closer to each other. That's why Paul brings everything back to the cross of Christ. When divisions are formed and barriers put up, it's all about self-justification, but in coming to the cross of Jesus, it's all about humility.

PRAYER: Dear Father, Thank You for the cross of Christ where I am washed clean and reconciled to You. May your presence in me always be reflected in my relationship with others.

TO REFLECT UPON: Are there divisions in my relationships or attitude that need to be brought to the cross of Jesus?