

WHAT DOES COLOSSIAN 2:14?

Many people are confused as to what Apostle Paul meant in Colossians 2:14. To understand Paul's message to Colossians we need to compare different bible versions. Please carefully read the following parallel verses to better understand what Apostle Paul was talking about.

Colossians 2:14 Parallel Verses

Colossians 2:14, NIV: "having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross."

Colossians 2:14, ESV: "by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."

Colossians 2:14, KJV: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;"

Colossians 2:14, NASB: "having cancelled the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

Colossians 2:14, NLT: "He cancelled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross."

Colossians 2:14, CSB: "He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross."

What does Colossians 2:14 mean?

[\[↑ See verse text ↑\]](#)

This verse continues the thought begun in verse 13, explaining how the Colossian believers had been forgiven. Though the Colossians were once dead in sin, and uncircumcised, now they are alive and "spiritually circumcised" in Christ. In this verse, Paul makes special emphasis on several aspects of the forgiveness we have in Jesus.

First, Jesus cancelled the record of our debt, in the same way a legal pardon cancels the penalty for that crime. In the day and time Paul wrote this, a person could be arrested or enslaved to pay off financial debts. They could also be enslaved as punishment for committing a crime. The image Paul's original readers would have gotten is a person's financial debt being erased along with the legal consequences. A believer no longer lived under the threat of punishment or enslavement to sin.

Second, Jesus "set aside" our sins as believers. This is a separate action from the legal or financial metaphor. Declaring someone "pardoned" does not necessarily mean they are "welcomed." However, according to Paul, those who put their faith in Christ have their sins removed from His sight. The failures of a saved believer are no longer a barrier between them and God. God's forgiveness not only means freedom from the eternal punishment of sin, it means we can have a living relationship with God, now.

Third, for the believer in Christ, the death of Jesus on the cross is sufficient payment for all sins. Paul uses a graphic metaphor here, of sin itself being crucified. In that era, crucifixion was not merely a brutal form of execution, it was a sign of absolute rejection. There were many other ways to execute people at that time, but crucifixion carried a sense of shame and disowning. So, when God crucifies sin, He is not merely killing it, He is completely and utterly ignoring it and cutting it off.

This thought is further emphasized in verse 15, where Paul says that Christ's victory over sin is a mark of "open shame" for the spiritual powers which oppose us.

Context summary

When we Study Colossians 2:14 more deeply, it becomes abundantly clear that the only handwriting that was against us is the written record of how we have broken the Torah/law – our SINS... Consider the following translations:

“He wiped out the bill of charges against us, because of the regulations it stood as a testimony against us; but He removed it by nailing it to the execution stake.”Colossians 2:14 Jewish New Testament

“...Think of it! All sins forgiven, the slate wiped clean, that old arrest warrant canceled and nailed to Christ's cross...” Colossians 2:14 The Message Bible

“He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.” Colossians 2:14 New Living Translation

“God wiped out the charges that were against us for disobeying the Law of Moses. He took them away and nailed them to the cross.” Colossians 2:14 Contemporary English Version

WHAT WAS NAILED TO THE CROSS? NOT THE LAW – IT WAS OUR SINS!

Paul was not preaching that the law was nailed to the cross. He was saying that our sins and its record were nailed to the cross. Remember sin is breaking the law (1 John 3:4). Therefore, being forgiven of past sins is not a license to continue breaking the law/ Sinning. In Roman 7:12 Paul says that “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good. Something holy and good cannot be nailed to the cross. Jesus Christ said that the law will not pass away till heaven and earth pass away. Mathew 5:17-19. Therefore Paul the servant of Christ could not nail the law to the cross. My prayer is that you test every doctrine by the word of God.

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