



[Colossians 2:14](#)

(14) 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;

King James Version

In their struggle to find a New Testament scripture that supports their misconception that [God's law](#) is "done away," antinomians point to [Colossians 2:14](#) to "prove" that Christ nailed the law of [God](#) to the cross. Proponents of such a teaching say that the "handwriting of requirements [ordinances, KJV]" refers to the law "that was against us." They further claim that Christ "took it out of the way" or abolished the law.

The phrase "handwriting of requirements" is translated from the Greek phrase *cheirographon tois dogmasin*. *Cheirographon* means anything written by hand, but can more specifically apply to a legal document, bond, or note of debt. *Dogmasin* refers to decrees, laws, or ordinances, and in this context means a body of beliefs or practices that have become the guidelines governing a person's conduct or way of life.

What Paul is saying is that, by His death, Christ has justified us—brought us into alignment with His Law—and wiped out the note of guilt or debt that we owed as a result of our sins. Before [repentance](#), our lives had been governed by the standards and values of this present, evil world—the "decrees, laws and ordinances" of the society in which we lived. After repentance and acceptance of Christ, we embark on a new way of life and live by God's standards and values. Consequently, God wipes out the debt we acquired as a result of our sins and imputes righteousness to us.

Also notice that the phrase "handwriting of requirements" restates the phrase immediately before it. "Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us" parallels "having forgiven you all trespasses." Thus, Paul could not be referring to the law itself but rather to the record of our transgression of that law—sin!

The last sentence in verse 14 reads: "And He has taken it out of the way..." In this

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Colossians 2:14 (<http://www.theberean.org>) sentence, the word "it" is a singular pronoun and refers back to the singular word "handwriting." "Requirements" could not be its antecedent because "requirements" is plural. So, some kind of handwriting—anote, a record, or a citation—was affixed to the cross.

Historically, only two objects were nailed to the stake of crucifixion: 1) the condemned person and 2) an inscription naming the crimes for which he was being punished. Thus, when Jesus was crucified, only His body and Pilate's inscription ("This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"; see [Matthew 27:37](#); [Mark 15:26](#); [Luke 23:38](#); [John 19:19](#)) were nailed to the cross. Normally, the inscription would be more accusative, saying something like, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, who rebelled against Caesar." Pilate's complimentary inscription replaced the customary note or record of guilt—the "handwriting of requirements" that would have been found nailed to the crosses of the two malefactors crucified with Him.

Just before He died, when the Father forsook Him ([Matthew 27:46](#)), our sins were symbolically nailed to the cross in His body. "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed" ([I Peter 2:24](#)). At the time of His crucifixion, [Jesus Christ](#) became [sin](#) for us. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" ([II Corinthians 5:21](#)). Our note of debt that we owed God as a result of our sins is what was "taken out of the way" and "nailed . . . to the cross."

— Earl L. Henn (1934-1997)

To learn more, see:

[Was God's Law Nailed to the Cross?](#)

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