

“Remembering God’s Redemptive Work” Part 2, Sermon Notes: Ephesians 2:11-22

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

Introduction

“Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision " by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands-- ¹² *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” (Ephesians 2:11-12 NAU)

- As you remember, last week we saw that we were without hope
- Our former condition outside of Jesus Christ was not only dead in our sins (vs 1), but we were also outside of the covenant promises of God
- All people are sinners and all have fallen short of the glory of God
- But through the Jews God promised a Messiah
- The Gentiles on the other hand were without hope
- And as we saw last week, not only were we without hope, those who were the people of God did not want anything to do with us

Commenting on this:

Alfred Edersheim The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah pgs. 62-64

“ . . . [E]very Gentile child, so soon as born, was to be regarded as unclean. Those who actually worshipped mountains, hills, bushes, etc. – in short, gross idolaters – **should be cut down with the sword.**” . . . Rabbinic legislation kept certain definite objects in view, which may thus be summarized:

1. To prevent Jews from being inadvertently led into idolatry;
2. To avoid all participation in idolatry;
3. Not to do anything that would aid the heathen in their worship;
4. And, beyond all of this, not to give pleasure, nor even help, to the heathens.

The later included a most dangerous principle, capable of almost indefinite application of fanaticism. Even the Mishnah goes so far (Ab Z. 2.1) as to forbid aid to a mother in the hour of her need, or nourishment to her babe, **in order to bring up a child for idolatry!**

“In truth, the bitter hatred which the Jew bore to the Gentile can only be explained from the estimate entertained of his character. The most vile, and even unnatural, crimes were imputed to them. It was not safe to leave cattle in their charge, to allow their women to nurse infants, or their physicians to attend the sick.”

“Painful as these details are, they might be multiplied. And yet the bigotry of these Rabbis was, perhaps, not worse than that of other sectaries. It was a painful logical necessity of their system, against which their heart, no doubt, often rebelled; and it must be truthfully added, it was in measure accounted for by the terrible history of Israel.”

- At worst there was bitter hatred towards the Gentiles
- At best there was a desire on behalf of the Jewish people to protect themselves from ungodly influences
- In either case we Gentiles were left without the hope of salvation
- And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.” (Acts 10:28 NAU)

We were without

1. The hope of a Messiah
2. Citizenship in Israel
3. Covenants from God
4. Hope
5. God

This is not to say that God never saved any Gentiles before Christ, nor is this to say there wasn't an opportunity for them to be saved. But what is clear is that we Gentiles did not have any hope.

God has saved Gentiles in the past

Let me introduce you to three Gentile Women:

Tamar, Rehab, Ruth

God saved Gentiles

Tamar – Canaanite daughter-in-law of Judah – Gentile Woman

- God had taken the lives of her husbands and Judah's sons Er and Onan, because of their sinfulness
- Judah promises her that his youngest son Shelah would be her next husband

- But Judah does not keep his promise so Tamar concocts a plan
- She hears that her father-in-law is heading out to shear his sheep so she dresses as a harlot by covering her face, and waits for him to pass by
- She sees that Shelah is now of age to marry and she has not been given as his wife
- Judah then has relations with Tamar and she becomes pregnant
- When everyone finds out she is pregnant, she reveals to Judah that he is the father and he immediately recognizes that she was more righteous than he was
- Read Gen 38
- Tamar bears two sons Perez and Zerah

Rehab – Another Gentile woman

- Like Tamar, Rehab was guilty of prostitution
- She regularly practiced her trade
- She protected Joshua and the spies
- She lied to the messengers of the King of Jericho in order to protect the spies
- God then showed her grace and spared her life and the life of her family
- She ended up marrying Salmon and bearing the Son Boaz

Ruth also was a Gentile. She was a Moabite woman

- Ruth's first husband, the son of Naomi, died
- Naomi decided to return back to Judah so she sent her daughter-in-laws away so she could return alone
- Orpah returned but Ruth would not
- But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you *or* turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God. (Ruth 1:16 NAU)
- Ruth goes with Naomi back to Bethlehem
- There Naomi gave permission to Ruth to work in the fields of Boaz to provide for them both
- Naomi then helps Ruth get redeemed by Boaz
- Boaz then goes through the proper steps to be able to take Ruth as his wife

- Ruth had a son, and his name was Obed

Why is this important? Look at Matt 1:3-6

This is the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ: Notice the three women here

“Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by ***Tamar***, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram. ⁴ Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon. ⁵ Salmon was the father of Boaz by ***Rahab***, Boaz was the father of ***Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse.*** ⁶ ***Jesse was the father of David the king.*** David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah.” (Matthew 1:3-6 NAU)

- What you have here are three Gentile women that God includes in the Messianic line
- Three women that God has redeemed
- God saved Gentiles in the OT period and they were even allowed to participate in worship
- So despite not being part of the covenant people, God was still gracious to redeem Gentiles
- The disposition of the Jews may have been against the Gentiles
 - o IE Jonah against Nineveh
 - o Peter in Acts 10:28 – it is unlawful for us to associate with foreigners
- But God was demonstrating his grace and saving sinners from the Gentile nations

While God was gracious, it was still true that Gentiles were without hope

“Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision " by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands-- ¹² *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” (Ephesians 2:11-12 NAU)

1. Separated from Christ – ie we did not have a promise of a Messiah to come rescue us
2. Excluded from the commonwealth of Israel – we were not citizens
3. Strangers of the covenants of promise – No promises and no covenants were made with the Gentiles
4. No hope – just the fear of judgment
5. Without God – worshipped false gods instead of the God of the Bible

Without God's help we were completely without help:

But now . . .

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

This is the second time in this chapter where Paul draws our attention to God's work by contrasting our hopeless and fallen condition with the riches of God's gracious work.

The first time was in verse 4: when while we were dead, God was rich in kindness towards us and raised us from the dead.

Here, while were absent of any hope, God was kind to us and brought us near through the blood of Christ

2x now Paul contrasts our hopeless condition with the greatness of God's work.

** Contrasts enrich life:

- Dark vs Light
- Sweet vs Sour
- Weak vs Strong
- Fast vs Slow
- Rich vs Poor
- Soft vs Hard
- Loud vs Quiet
- Good vs Evil

Here Paul says:

Dead in sin vs made alive

Outside of the promises of God vs being brought near

The riches of God's work are evidenced in the contrasts between our fallen condition and our redeemed condition.

** In our text this morning Paul gives us three contrasts which we need to remember in order to appreciate the greatness of God's work in our salvation.

We need to Remember:

1. **The Contrast of Time – Formerly vs Now**

2. The Contrast of Status – Far off vs Near

3. The Contrast of Condition – Without Christ vs With Christ

Note: I like what Martyn Lloyd-Jones brought out in this text. He tells a story of a woman who was disappointed that she did not have a very rebellious life before she was saved. She said she wished she had so that she could see the change more readily. I can appreciate that sentiment but I think it misunderstands our fallen condition.

Lloyd-Jones felt the same way and reminded his hearers that the reason why we under appreciate our salvation is because we do not understand either how sinful we are or how desperate our condition was.

Even if you lived a good life; even if you barely sinned; even if you grew up in a Christian home and were shielded from a lot of sin you are still hopeless unless God bridges our fallen condition.

1. The Contrast of Time – Formerly vs. Now

“But now in Christ Jesus **you who formerly** were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:13 NAU)

The first contrast is a contrast of time. We who are in Christ were at one time formerly outside of God’s promises.

While we were hopeless Christ died for us.

Paul moves from the former condition to the new condition

Formerly – In the Greek “pote” ποτε

This word refers to time: Past time = formerly or once

For us here it is referring to our former condition: Used 4x in chapter 2

“You are dead in your transgressions and sins in which you **formerly** walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.” (Ephesians 2:2 NAU)

“Among them we too all **formerly** lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.” (Ephesians 2:3 NAU)

“Therefore remember that **formerly** you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is performed in the flesh by human hands—*“ (Ephesians 2:11 NAU)

“But now in Christ Jesus you who **formerly** were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:13 NAU)

“for you were **formerly** darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light” (Ephesians 5:8 NAU)

Formerly – walked according to this world, lived in lusts or our flesh, Gentiles in the flesh, far off, in the darkness

Now notice what our text says in Eph 2:13

But Now

Again referencing time.

Now our condition is different

Now we are in a different state of being

Our former condition is contrasted with the present condition. Here the present condition is having been brought near by the blood of Christ.

“in Christ Jesus”

We are now in the Christ in the messiah, Jesus of Nazareth

This is the only time this word is used in this book.

It is important to understand our condition is no longer as part of being separated from God.

We no longer walk according to this world

We no longer live in the lusts of our flesh

We no longer are outside of God’s promises

We are no longer far off

We are no longer in the darkness

We now have a new condition in Christ.

Formerly we were hopeless, but now we have hope.

This is the glorious work of salvation. God has given us hope which we possess now

2. The Contrast of Status – Far off vs Near

“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly **were far off** have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:13 NAU)

As Gentiles our status was being **far off**. Away from God. Away from God’s people. Away from the promises.

Gentiles were described as far off

"The LORD will bring a nation against you **from afar**, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand," (Deuteronomy 28:49 NAU)

- People will come from a distance and will speak a different language
- Far off by geography

"Now the generation to come, your sons who rise up after you and **the foreigner who comes from a distant land**, when they see the plagues of the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it, will say," (Deuteronomy 29:22 NAU)

"Also concerning the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, **when he comes from a far country for Your name's sake**" (1 Kings 8:41 NAU)

"Behold, I am bringing a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel," declares the LORD. "It is an enduring nation, It is an ancient nation, A nation whose language you do not know, Nor can you understand what they say." (Jeremiah 5:15 NAU)

"For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are **far off**, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." (Acts 2:39 NAU)

"And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you **far away** to the Gentiles.'" (Acts 22:21 NAU)

- The importance of the idea is this: God used to dwell with His people in the tabernacle
- The tabernacle was known as the house of God
- For the Gentile, to be far away from the tabernacle was to be far away from God

Contrast the Gentiles who were geographically separated from God's people with Israel who was near.

Vs Israel which is near

Near because of their closeness to God, temple life covenants

"And He has lifted up a horn for His people, Praise for all His godly ones; **Even for the sons of Israel, a people near to Him.** Praise the LORD!" (Psalm 148:14 NAU)

- The Jews were near to God because had chosen to set His love upon them
- They Jews were near to God and for this reason:
- God dwelled in their midst
- God promised the Messiah to come through them
- God had made a covenant with them
- God had set His seal upon them

- God has given them hope of protection and blessing

The act of receiving a Gentile was called, “making him near”.

- The Gentiles were made near by taking part in the mosaic law
- Now through death of Christ
- Reconciled into the Church and into God

Here the two parties, the far away Gentiles and the near Jews, are made one in Christ Jesus.

We have been brought near

Another great work of God here

We no longer have a status of being outside of God’s work and promises.

We no longer have the status of being separated physically or spiritually from God

We no longer have the status of being far off from God

The text says here:

You have been brought near

Aor Pass Indicative – this is a work that has been done to us. We have been brought near through the blood of Christ

Not by your **work** but by His blood

Not by your **doing** but by His blood

Not by your **will** but by His blood

Not by your **power** but by His blood

Not by your **influence** but by His blood

We who were far off were made near by the blood of Christ

Our new status gives us hope:

1. Contrast of Time
2. Contrast of Status
3. **Contrast of Condition – Without Christ vs With Christ**

You remember what Paul said in verse 12 we were without Christ.

- Without the hope of the Messiah
- Without a redeemer
- Without one to take our sin

But now the glorious contrast

By the blood of Christ we are brought near.

By association with Christ Jesus

Or through Christ Jesus

- Not of ourselves
- Not of our abilities or resources

Now those who were separated from Christ are found in Christ

Bolstering vs 8-10, But

By the blood of Christ

This is the means by which Gentiles are brought near. The blood of Christ

“In Him we have ***redemption through His blood***, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7 NAU)

“whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;” (Romans 3:25 NAU)

“Much more then, ***having now been justified by His blood***, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.” (Romans 5:9 NAU)

“Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16 NAU)

“and through ***Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross***; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.²¹ And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds,²² ***yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death***, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—“ (Colossians 1:20-22 NAU)

“and not through the blood of goats and calves, ***but through His own blood***, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” (Hebrews 9:12 NAU)

“how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14 NAU)

“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,”
(Hebrews 10:19 NAU)

“How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:29 NAU)

- To walk in sin after believing in Christ is to trample the blood of Christ and dishonor his work

“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.” (Hebrews 13:12 NAU)

“Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord,” (Hebrews 13:20 NAU)

“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, **to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood**: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.” (1 Peter 1:2 NAU)

“but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.” (1 Peter 1:19 NAU)

“but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, **and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.**” (1 John 1:7 NAU)

Here Jesus is referred to by Paul as Christ.

We are brought near by the blood of Christ.

Christ is the promised Messiah of the Jews

“As the sacrificial death of Christ is the only means of redemption, so also it is the only means of reconciliation.” Ff Bruce 295

**** We used to live outside of Christ and we were separated from God and from His people. But now we contrast that former condition with our new condition in Christ. We are now near to God and near to God’s people.**

The cost of reconciliation was a price we could not pay. Death

The rest of Chapter 2 explains the significance of this union with Christ between the Jews and the Gentiles

Our new condition in Christ is going to be explained in the weeks to come.

This new condition comes with a promise of peace made by God

"Creating the praise of the lips. Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near," Says the LORD, "and I will heal him." (Isaiah 57:19 NAU)

This promise is fulfilled at the cross

Atonement -Description of the atonement – brings us near to god

Judgment of God is satisfied in the death of Christ

We have the forgiveness of sins

Jesus came in blood to shed his blood that we might be brought near by His blood because we are made clean through His blood.

Without the incarnation we do not have the forgiveness of sins

No prerequisites for coming near or for receiving the blood of Christ

Conclusion

** Paul gives us three contrasts which we need to remember in order to appreciate the greatness of God's work in our salvation.

We need to Remember:

- 1. The Contrast of Time – Formerly vs Now**
- 2. The Contrast of Status – Far off vs Near**
- 3. The Contrast of Condition – Without Christ vs With Christ**

The sharp contrast between our former condition and our present condition, between our former status and our present status, between the time in the past and the time now helps bring the glory of the gospel to the forefront.

Our salvation is not:

- How we improve
- How we live better for God
- How we now act for Him

But instead our salvation is about our relationship to Jesus Christ

- Now are you close to Christ?
- Now are you drawing near to God

- Now are you hoping in Christ

We can say it this way:

What are you today? Are you now a child of the promise?

Where are you today? Are you seeking to draw near to Christ?

Who is with you today? Does Christ have his evident marks in your life?

Remember, this is salvation: being near to Christ

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