

GENTILES BROUGHT NEAR IN CHRIST

Part 11 Ephesians Chapter 2

Ephesians 2:12-13 **SLIDE**

*... At that time you were **without Christ**, being aliens alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now **in Christ Jesus** you who once were **far off** have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ.*

Paul's primary agenda here is to magnify Christ's magnificent work for us and in us ...

This also follows on from what he has been showing us in **chapter 2** about how **God has rescued us from our helpless state ... 100% in grace**, Where we were dead ... and we were oppressed (**vs 1-3**)...

BUT GOD Himself quickened us ... made us alive ... raised us up ... seated us ... (**vs 4-6**)

Made us his workmanship (**v10**)...

And here in **verse 13** we read again this thought ... '**in Christ Jesus**' we who were **afar off** have been **brought near** by the blood of Jesus.

So, this whole section of Scripture is to glorify the Grace of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

He actually came into our outer darkness ... found us and rescued us ... and now in Him, has brought us close to the Father's heart in intimate fellowship ...

BUT HOW FAR OFF WERE WE & WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

'Far off' is out of reach, abandoned and excluded.

LOOK AT THE WORDS PAUL USES TO DESCRIBE OUR
DESPERATE CONDITION WITHOUT CHRIST

1. **ALIENATED & STRANGERS**
2. **WITHOUT HOPE**
3. **GODLESS**

SLIDE of newly discovered Makemake

One commentator describes our former state without Christ LIKE A PLANET revolving around the sun, not in the nearer orbits of planets warmed, brightened and beautified by the solar beams, but in *the outermost ring of all - like the cold, dark orbit of Uranus or Neptune, which the sunbeams hardly reach to lighten or to warm.* (Pulpit Commentary)

This was our desperate state before Christ ... and indeed the world's state before Jesus Came ...

THAT HORRIBLE TIME NOT ONLY DESCRIBES THE TIME WHEN WE WERE WITHOUT CHRIST ... BUT ALSO REFERS TO THE CONDITION OF THE GENTILE NATIONS BEFORE JESUS HAD COME INTO THE WORLD ...

VERSE 11 CALLS US ... *'the Gentiles in the flesh'*
'applies to the pre-Christian *lifetime* ... a time which was *subsequent to the incarnation* (Meyer)

LET'S LOOK AT OUR FIRST CONDITION WITHOUT CHRIST

PAUL DESCRIBES US AS ...

1. BEING ALIENATED FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

Ephesians 2:12 **SLIDE**

At that time you were without Christ, (1) being aliens alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise (2) having no hope and (3) without God in the world.

So, after Paul has been talking about us being either in Christ or without Christ ... **WHY DOES HE SUDDENLY START TALKING ABOUT ISRAEL?**

It's like we've been cruising along enjoying the Grace of God ... rejoicing at all He's done for us through Jesus ... WHEN SUDDENLY PAUL TAKES A SHARP TURN TO THE RIGHT AND HEADS OFF INTO ISRAEL ...

Ok ... we were lost in outer darkness before Christ came ... **BUT WHY HEAD TO ISRAEL?**

FRIENDS, BEFORE JESUS CAME TO THIS EARTH ...

- **THERE WAS ONE PLACE OF HOPE** WHERE THE TRUE GOD WAS WORSHIPPED
- **THERE WAS ONE PLACE OF REAL FAITH** IN THE EXISTENCE OF MESSIAH
- **THERE WAS ONE PLACE THAT WAITED FOR & SINCERELY LONGED FOR** MESSIAH'S COMING

GOD APPOINTED ISRAEL AS THE HOPE OF THE NATIONS

THIS WAS THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL refers to Israel's **one common belief** ... THEIR FAITH THAT MESSIAH WOULD COME & WOULD COME THROUGH THEM.

ISRAEL WAS THE PLACE OF FAITH IN THE MESSIAH

They taught about Him and they waited for the Messiah – the Saviour of the world.

GOD'S PROMISE OF MESSIAH WAS REVEALED TO THEM BUT IT WAS **NOT FOR THEM ALONE**.

SLIDE ISRAEL WAS THE ONE PLACE OF HOPE that God had placed in the earth before the Lord Jesus came ... TO SHARE ITS HOPE & BLESSING WITH THE WORLD.

Genesis 12:2-3 **SLIDE**

*I will make you a great nation [Israel] I will bless you and make your name great and **you shall be a blessing**. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed**.*

IT WAS GOD'S PLAN TO MAKE ISRAEL A BLESSING TO ALL NATIONS AS PETER PREACHES –

Acts 3:25 Berean Study Bible

*You are sons of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers when He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring ... **all the families of the earth will be blessed**.*

Genesis 18:18 Berean Study Bible

*Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and through him **all the nations of the earth will be blessed**.*

Genesis 26:4 KJV

And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

GOD'S SALVATION & GLORY TO BE PROCLAIMED BY ISRAEL

Psalm 96:2-3 & 10 ESV **SLIDE**

*Sing to the LORD, bless His name; tell of His salvation from day to day. ³ **Declare His glory among the nations, His marvellous works among all the peoples!***

¹⁰ **SAY AMONG THE NATIONS, 'The Lord reigns' ...**

Psalm 48:1-2 NKJV

*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. ²Beautiful in elevation, **the joy of the whole earth**, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.*

SLIDE ISRAEL WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

Isaiah 42:6

... I will ... give you ... as a light to the Gentiles.

Benjamin Netanyahu in his 2017 UN speech quoted Isaiah 49:6 that the state of Israel is "a light unto the nations, bringing salvation to the ends of the earth".

BUT BEFORE CHRIST CAME THE REVERSE WAS TRUE

ISRAEL KEPT THE BLESSING TO THEMSELVES ...

THEY BECAME EXCLUSIVE ... THEY BECAME ELITIST

*This is why in our text, that Paul tells us before Jesus came ... **WE GENTILES WERE ALIENATED FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL***

Ephesians 2:12 **SLIDE**

*At that time you were without Christ, **(1) being aliens alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.***

LOOK AT THE VERB PAUL USES ...

This verb **'alienated'** is actually in the **'passive voice'** which means it was something that happened to us as Gentiles. If it were **'active'** it would mean it was something we did ... IT WOULD MEAN **'WE ALIENATED OURSELVES FROM ISRAEL'S FAITH'**. But The Passive voice MEANS, **WE WERE ALIENATED FROM ISRAEL** ... In fact, the actual Greek says, **'Having been alienated'** from the commonwealth of Israel ...'

SO IF WE DIDN'T ALIENATE OURSELVES ... WHO DID?

ISRAEL DID!

**ISRAEL ALIENATED EVERYONE WHO WAS NOT A JEW ...
ANYONE WHO WAS NOT CIRCUMCISED**

*Many years ago, I was taught that this verse meant we needed to appreciate what Israel had done to bring salvation to us.
I love and honour Israel as God's chosen people ...*

However ...

**THIS DOES NOT SPEAK ABOUT OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD ISRAEL
THIS SPEAKS ABOUT ISRAEL'S ATTITUDE TOWARD US**

Look at verse 11 where Paul brings out the Jew's prejudice and hear Paul's scathing criticism of them –

Ephesians 2:11 New American Standard Bible **SLIDE**

*Therefore remember that previously you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" **by the so-called** "Circumcision" which is performed in the flesh by human hands*

So we read here in verse 12

**IT WAS NOT THE GENTILES WHO REJECTED ISRAEL ...
IT WAS ISRAEL THAT REJECTED US GENTLES ...**

WE WERE CALLED 'GENTILE DOGS'

'Goyim' used by Jews for Gentiles is a pejorative term meaning 'DULL / STUPID.

*A common saying is, '**Dos ken nor a goy** - Something only a stupid Gentile is capable of doing.'*

So to get the truth of this verse 12 we must hear the heart of it –
GOD WAS NOT CRITICISING THE GENTILE NATIONS FOR NOT ACKNOWLEDGING ISRAEL ...

GOD IS NOT SAYING, 'YOU REFUSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE ISRAEL MY CHOSEN ... YOU REJECTED MY COVENANTS OF PROMISE AND YOU WERE HOPELESS & GODLESS HEATHENS ...

YOU HORRIBLE PEOPLE YOU NEED TO REPENT.'

No He has a heart of love for all people – Jew and Gentile alike ...

GOD SENT HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON **BECAUSE HE LOVED THE WORLD ...**

GOD LOVES ALL PEOPLE NO MATTER WHAT COLOUR ... NO MATTER WHAT GENDER ...

GOD WANTS TO REACH ALL PEOPLE WITH HIS SALVATION AND BRING THEM TO FAITH.

He is not willing that any should perish but wants all to come to faith. (2 Peter 3:9)

If anything, Paul is criticizing the Jews saying, 'Why were you not there for these lost Gentiles.'

THIS CAN BE FURTHER SEEN IN THE STATEMENT –

'STRANGERS TO THE COVENANTS OF PROMISE'

Strangers = xenos = 'a strange foreigner' from which we get our word 'xenophobia' ...

There was prejudice against us.

GOD HAD RAISED UP A PEOPLE TO REPRESENT HIM ...

TO PROCLAIM HIS STANDARDS ...

TO PRONOUNCE HIS PROMISES ...

AND TO PROVIDE HIS PRESENCE TO ALL PEOPLE.

BUT THEY FAILED IN THEIR PURPOSE ...

THEY BECAME INSULAR ... EXCLUSIVE ...

THE GENTILES WERE IGNORANT BY DEFAULT

Before Jesus came – the Gentile nations had no idea about a Messiah ... about a Saviour ... And dare I say ... if Jesus had never come we would be in the same alienated state still ...

This is one reason why Jesus was so upset with the money changers in the temple ... not only because they were desecrating God's holy temple ... But because it had become a Jewish exclusive club where the Gentiles were not allowed to come –

Mark 11:17

*Then He taught, saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called **a house of prayer for all nations**’? But you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”* ([Quoting Isaiah 56:7](#))

BUT JESUS SUCCEEDED WHERE ISRAEL FAILED ... and now in Christ Jesus we who were not a people have become a people

1 Peter 2:9-10 Berean Study Bible **SLIDE**

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

SO LET’S LOOK AT OUR SECOND CONDITION WITHOUT CHRIST

2. WITHOUT ANY HOPE AT ALL

Ephesians 2:12 **SLIDE**

*At that time you were without Christ, being alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, **(2) having no hope** and without God in the world.*

WITHOUT CHRIST WE ARE WITHOUT HOPE ...

THIS MEANS ... WITHOUT ANY HOPE AT ALL ...

IN A STATE OF UTTER HOPELESSNESS ...

WITHOUT CHRIST ... THE WORLD IS FULL OF HOPELESSNESS

*Shakespeare’s greatest plays were all ‘Tragedies’.
Wordsworth stated, ‘The still, sad Music of Humanity’.*

Hollywood dramatizes their hopelessness, trying to make some meaning out of it all ...

But their movies end up where they began in depressing melancholy which you just wasted 2 hours watching ... and feel worse off for doing so ...

**BUT THEY WIN ACADEMY AWARDS ... AND ARE CALLED ‘MEANINGFUL’
‘TOUCHING’**

***‘NOMADLAND’ with Francis McDormand is an example of this –
A woman in her sixties, after losing everything in the Great
Recession, embarks on a journey through the American West,
living as a van-dwelling modern-day nomad. She meets other
Nomads who all have no home and no place to go.
AND THEY ALL LIVE SADLY EVER AFTER ... ALL CONSOLING EACH
OTHER IN A CATHARTIC STATE OF PESSIMISM ...***

**WITHOUT CHRIST ... ALL OUR HOPES ARE FALSE HOPES &
FADING HOPES & WILL FAIL IN THE END**

Proverbs 13:12 Berean Study Bible

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

THERE ARE A LOT OF SICK HEARTS WALKING AROUND THIS PLANET

WITHOUT CHRIST ... THERE IS NO HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE

The Atheist, all dressed up with no place to go.

**WITHOUT CHRIST ... NO HOPE OF MEETING A DECEASED LOVED
ONE AGAIN**

1 Thessalonians 4:13 NIV

***Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about
those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve **like the rest of
mankind who have no hope.*****

I once experienced total hopelessness ... IT WAS HORROR & TOTAL DESPAIR

BUT NOW IN CHRIST WE HAVE A LIVING HOPE

1 Peter 1:3 ESV **SLIDE**

***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be **born
again to a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ
from the dead.***

WE HAVE ETERNAL HOPE ... THROUGH ALL THIS PANDEMIC

**SO LET’S LOOK AT OUR THIRD CONDITION
WITHOUT CHRIST**

3. WITHOUT GOD IN [AN EVIL] WORLD

Ephesians 2:12 **SLIDE**

*At that time you were without Christ, being alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and **without God in the world.***

THIS IS THE MOST HORRIFIC STATE TO BE IN ...

John 20:17 NIV **SLIDE**

*Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, **to my God and your God.**'"*

Psalms 48:14 NIV

*For **this God is our God for ever and ever;** he will be our guide even to the end.*

There may be times of hopelessness and even despair in this negative pandemic ... the constant bombardment of negative news ...

But let me say, even in those times ... **WE STILL HAVE OUR GOD TO RUN TO.**

DAVID STATES –

Psalms 18:2 NIV

*... **My God is my rock,** in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold*

Psalms 61:2 KJV

When my heart is overwhelmed ... lead me to the rock that is higher than I

*Though I walk through the valley of deep, dark and desperate times ... and I cannot see any future ... **I KNOW YOU ARE WITH ME ... YOU ARE MY GOD ...*** (See Psalm 23)

PAUL STATES

2 Timothy 4:17 NLT

*The first time I was brought before the judge, no one came with me. Everyone abandoned me. May it not be counted against them. ¹⁷ **But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength** so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear ...*

WHEN WE WERE OUTSIDE OF CHRIST WE HAD NO HOPE & NO GOD!

BUT NOW IN CHRIST ... WE WHO WERE FAR AWAY HAVE BEEN BROUGHT NEAR ... (Ephesians 2:13)

IT'S LIKE THE 'BUT GOD' OF EPHESIANS 2:4 ...

SLIDE

WE WERE WITHOUT CHRIST ...

**We were left like abandoned children without any home or faith ...
Lost ... Hopeless ... and Godless**

SLIDE

BUT NOW IN CHRIST

WE HAVE BEEN BROUGHT NEAR.