



Ephesians

Part 15

Ephesians 2:11-23
Week of June 13, 2021

Before Connect Group

- Read Ephesians 2:11-23
 - Watch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>
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Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.’

Ephesians 2:11-23, ESV

Sermon Notes

You were separated from Christ because Christ was always the end and the point of every single promise, law, and covenant to ever be given by God.

It is amazing how powerful the desire to be with someone can be. I'm not just talking about liking someone. I mean the insane things people will do to just be around other people. Take concerts for instance. I was reading that the average ticket price to go see the rolling stones is over \$600. I have heard of some people flying to another continent just to go to a concert. A photo of Jessie James (an outlaw) was sold at auction for \$51k. There is sports memorabilia, games, concerts, speakers, etc.

This morning, we are here to because in our worship and in the Word of God, we are able to be "near" to God! We must consider the worth of entering into the presence of God and finding our enjoyment in the presence of God.

- *Ephesians 1:15-19 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might*
- We see that from verse 19 all the way through our text for the next several weeks, Paul is concerned with our understanding of the "immeasurable greatness of his power toward us."
- That power worked in us through Christ Jesus
- In 2:1-9 we see to description from death to life
- And in 11-23 we can see that he now speaks of from far to near.
- Notice the structure of this section. When Paul spoke of the death to life movement, he spent the first three verses of the text speaking of who we were in our sin and death, the in vs. 4 the sudden shift of God's grace changes this death to life.
- The same movement is seen here. In 11-12 there is a description of our despair without God's grace, and then in verse 13 we read, "But now in Christ Jesus"

Understanding Being Near to God

- In a world saturated with love songs and passionate pleas of the heart, it is important for us to understand what is actually being proclaimed in this section of text.
- Paul is still speaking about the immeasurable power of God as he sets out this description. When we read this section, we are in danger of simplifying it to simply coming in close to God for a hug. If this is the way we see this text, then we will be in danger of weekly showing up to a church service in order to receive our hug from God, rather than commune with the most Holy.

You and I Were Created With An Intimate Hunger To Be In the Presence of God

- *Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on*

the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

- As the very image of God we were designed to be near to Him. Filled with the characteristics of His rule and dominion. We were created to reflect Him into all creation that all the earth would know with clarity who was the God of all creation.

Sin’s Most Potent Consequence is Separation From the Presence of God.

- The pleasure of God’s presence is overwhelmed by fear within it.
- *Genesis 3:8-10 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”*
- This is the ongoing and unconscious proclamation of humanity.
- We will do anything to subside our fear of standing before a righteous and Holy God in just judgement of our sin.
- We will deny He exists
- Maybe even worse, we will harbor some sort of anger toward him based on our judgement of Him.
- *Genesis 3:22-24 Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.*

The Greatest Threat To Darkness is Light

- Man’s greatest need has now become man’s greatest threat.
- *Exodus 33:1-3 The LORD said to Moses, “Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your offspring I will give it.’ I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.”*

What does it mean for us to talk about being brought near by the blood of Christ? With the Biblical backdrop, it makes sense that Paul would parallel these two movements as impossible if not divinely provided. It is impossible for a dead man to come alive. It is impossible for a sinner to stand safely before a Holy God. It is only by the immeasurable greatness of His power through Christ, completely in Grace, we can understand these realities.

God’s Immeasurable Great Power

We Were Not Set Apart, Now in Christ, We Are Set Apart

- The covenant promise that God made to Abraham shows up in chapters 12 and 15 of Genesis. In chapter 17 we see God command Abraham to circumcise his children as a “sign” of this covenant.
- *Genesis 17:9-14 And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant,*

you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

- The significance is that God had set aside a people for himself. A people who would have special relationship and access to the God of creation. A people who would once again display the Glory of God upon the earth.
- Circumcision became a sticking point between the Jew and the Gentile. Rightfully so, God had chosen to set aside for himself the Jew, not the gentile.
- The Jew would thank God in his prayer that he were not born a Gentile.
- *Psalm 147:19-20 He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules. Praise the LORD!*
- The intent of Circumcision
- *Deuteronomy 10:14-16 Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.*
- Paul's view on circumcision is full in the work of Christ.
- *Colossians 2:8-15 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

We Had No Hope, But Now In Christ We Have All Hope

- The result of this entire phrase in verse 12 is "having no hope and without God in the world.
- The reason that you were hopeless, is because you were separated from Christ.
- What's most interesting about this, is that the following words are an unfolding of that statement...
- Alienated from commonwealth (or lifestyle) of Israel
- Strangers to covenant promises
- The only hope that we had to be near to God was the Law and Covenant promise.
- God's presence is judgment to sin.
- The Law of Moses speaks of this judgment and sets out regulations to provide for God's people to be "near" to His presence.

- I believe this is behind the statement “commonwealth of Israel”
- Covenant promises is Hope of God’s provision and grace for generations to come.
- Paul’s framework here in this text is that this commonwealth and covenant promise was always Christ!
- Therefore, you in Christ are given all hope of covenant through the sign of new covenant circumcision of your heart! You have all of the hope lacking nothing because of your redemption in Christ’s blood.

We Were Kept From the Presence of God, But Now We Are Invited In Through Christ.

- It is through the blood of Christ that we can stand before our heavenly father...
- This is a blessing true today that all covenant hope and promise pointed toward.
- Our sin no longer causes us to hide from the glorious presence of God. We now have access through the forgiveness and redemption we have in Christ.
- *Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,*
- Remember today that the New Covenant through the blood of Christ has done an immeasurable powerful work of drawing you “near” to God!
- *Hebrews. 10:15-25 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Today, there is more value in meeting with God through the blood of Jesus Christ than any other event or activity that you could be looking forward to. *Matthew 13:44-45-46 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

Connect Group Discussion Questions

- What changes as we abide in the presence of God? What does it mean to be in His presence? How does this reveal God's immeasurable greatness?
- Why were we once kept outside of the presence of God? What would have been the consequences of standing before God sinful? How does Jesus Christ offer us forgiveness and redemption from our sin?
- What does it mean that, because of Jesus, we have been invited into the presence of God? How does this fulfill the words of the prophets and make us near to God?
- What is the difference between works performed by human hands and works performed according to the Spirit? Which is longer lasting and efficacious? Why?
- What changes in our lives when we abide in the presence of God? What kind of things do we need to leave behind? What kind of things do we need to pick up?

Challenge For The Week

Through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, we are welcome to return to the presence of God. Where we once were separated from God by our sinful nature, we have been redeemed and forgiven as we approach God in His presence. All who come to Him and submit to Him as Lord and Savior will be saved.

- Where do you continue in your own striving to earn your salvation and earn your standing with God? Take some time this week to consider where you are still falling short and ask the Lord to forgive you, restore you, and grow you in maturity of faith.
- Sin has separated everyone from the presence of God. Yet, God calls us to return to Him. Who do you know to pray for that they would come to know the Lord? Invite them to church this week.