

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 2:11-22 - HOPELESS, ENEMIES AND STRANGERS

ON BOARD: Skinner (and other class names)

INTRO: Many of our last names originated as the identification of a long-forgotten family vocation or trade.

[Skinner (Norse); Taylor (French); Barker (Eng)]

When we became new believers, we all took a new family name - that of Christian. We've been adopted into a new home with new Father, brothers and sisters. And our new residence is in a spiritual kingdom where Jesus is King. Our citizenship is a heavenly/spiritual one now. Paul puts it wonderfully.

[RECAP: The glory of God in Christ; the glory of Christ in us.]

I. ONCE HOPELESS, BUT NOW HOPEFUL IN CHRIST - vs. 11-13 - "Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh — who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands — that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from 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."

A. Vs. 11: "Therefore remember that you . . ."

What is one of the biggest differences between the A students and C students you've known? Both may have put in the same effort in studying. The C students may have put in more study. Some of the A students could breeze through. The blessings and curses of a photographic memory. Not really photographic, but autobiographical - Hyperthymésia. The "I remember being diapered as a baby" folks. Affects 50 worldwide. Proves to be a curse. On the other hand, Spurgeon had a photographic memory, which helps us to understand how he could preach 40 minutes with only a sparse outline that was prepared on Saturdays. He read 6 books a week and remembered what was in them. He knew all his parishioners' names. Did Adam have Total Recall? Lost in the fall? Defective Memory Syndrome (DMS). Part of the Curse. God must continually remind us to "Remember!" Note: Peter addresses short memories 5 times in his letters. Will we have perfect memories in heaven?

B. "once Gentiles in the flesh — . . ."

What/who is a Gentile? How many of us aren't Gentiles? Gr. - *ethnos*. Some of us either grew up on the wrong side of the tracks, grew up in a broken home when it was socially despised, or born with a racial stigma and experienced rejection and ridicule. We were on the lower rungs of the social ladder. We weren't in the 'in' crowd. Felt like outsiders. But Paul's thought goes far beyond. Whether rich or poor, royalty or commoner, self-righteous or profligate, the Ephesians and all of us are "Gentiles in the flesh," carnal, filled with wickedness and idolatry. As Hendricksen says, they [and we] were "Christless, stateless, friendless, hopeless, and Godless."

- C. “who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands —”

As most Jews thought at the time, Gentiles were hated and unredeemable. Jonah typifies their attitude, then was clearly seen during Christ’s ministry [Pharisees]. Some Jews believed that God created the Gentiles to use as fuel for hell. Racism (cultural superiority) runs deep in any culture because of self righteousness. Likewise, the Gentiles hated the Jews. Even Pilate scorns the thought of being one. John 18:33-35.

- D. Vs. 12: “that at that time you were without Christ,”

No saving knowledge nor union with Him.

- E. “being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel”

Foreigners to the covenantal blessings given to the Jews. Remember the woman at the well being told by Jesus, “You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.” John 4. See Romans 3:1,2.

- F. “and strangers from the covenants of promise,”

They were strangers in comprehension and apprehension. [on board]

- G. “having no hope and without God in the world.”

To be without God is to be without hope. The Greek philosopher, Diogenes said, “I rejoice in the sport in my youth. Before long I will lie beneath the earth bereft of life, voiceless as a stone, and shall leave the sunlight which I love, good man though I am. Then shall I see nothing more. Rejoice, O my soul, in your youth!”

The Ephesians weren’t without their gods, but they were without the true God of creation and redemption. They had rejected Him, even though his law was written on their conscience (Rom. 2:15), and the proof of His existence was written on creation (Rom. 1:19,21)

- H. Vs. 13: “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

We’ve seen what it means to be “far off.” What does it mean to be “brought near?” It is spiritual intimacy of new and glorious relationship with the Lord Jesus through the forgiveness of sins. It is the privilege of direct communication with God through prayer. It is the experience of being adopted into God’s family the Church and the enjoyment of present and future blessings. Brought near is “to know God.” John 17:3.

II. ONCE ENEMIES, BUT NOW FRIENDS IN CHRIST - vs. 14-18 - "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandment *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father."

A. Vs. 14: "For He Himself is our peace,"

Calvin, "pulcherrimus titulus Christi" The most beautiful title of Christ.

He who is the Prince of Peace abolished our debt of sin through His sinless life and atonement on the cross, erasing the enmity between us and God.

B. "who has made both one," Jew and Gentile. Romans 9-11 (grafted into the vine - Romans 11:17,18).

C. "and has broken down the middle wall of separation," [courts ON BOARD]

The temple in Jerusalem was designed to separate the saint from the sinner. There was the outer court of the Gentiles, then the court of the Women, then the court of Israel, then the court of Priests and Levites, then the Holy Place, then the Holy of Holies. Christ has broken down and eliminated the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile. [from outer court to Holy of Holies]. Note: after excavation, it was seen this was a 5' wall in Herod's temple. An inscription was found which read: "No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone caught doing so will have himself to blame for his death."

D. Vs. 15: "having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandment *contained* in ordinances," [not moral law]

The ceremonial law being fulfilled in Christ, it no longer existed, so the enmity between believing Jew and believing Gentile disappeared as well. [Jesus' saying "it is finished" on the cross includes the fulfillment of types and shadows that pointed to His life and death].

Little wonder that the Jews hated Paul and wanted to kill him. Paul's gospel abrogated the Jewish ceremonial laws. Their way of life was threatened by these Christian converts who wanted nothing to do with being under the law.

E. "so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace,"

Calvin: "However much Jews may once have differed from Gentiles, in Christ they have become a single race . . . There is one spiritual regeneration that ties us together."

- F. Vs. 16: “and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”

[What is the “one body?”](#) The Church, where all differences are leveled and put to death. Who was our greatest enemy before our salvation? Not ourselves or Satan. It was God Himself: Romans 5:10.

- G. Vs. 17: “And He came and preached peace to you were afar off and to those who were near.”

[Christ preached peace to the Jews during His earthly ministry, but how did He preach peace to the Gentiles?](#) Through the Apostles, especially Paul. Jesus continues to declare peace through His ministers of the Word.

- H. Vs. 18: “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”

The Trinity orchestrates our new relationship: Jesus is our Mediator. Our one and only Advocate before the Father. The Holy Spirit moves and helps us to pray and sanctifies us.

How completely unbiblical and dishonoring are any prayers to dead saints. [Read “Prayer Before a Picture or a Statue of Saint Anne”] God the Father is unapproachable in their view, and Catholics pray to saints so the saints can intercede and pray to God on our behalf.

- III. ONCE ALIENS, BUT NOW HEAVENLY CITIZENS IN CHRIST - Vs. 19-22 - “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

- A. Vs. 19: “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,”

[As believers, we all now have a dual citizenship.](#) One is terrestrial and national. One is heavenly. And our heavenly citizenship does away with pride and racial prejudice. In Christ’s kingdom, all are [saints](#) - all are [kings](#) - all are [priests](#) before God. We all have equal access to the throne of grace. We all are sons and daughters in the household of God the Father. We are ONE in Christ through amazing grace. John 3:16 (world of the Gentiles as well as the Jews).

[What’s one of the most striking things about our local church? Inclusion.](#) Spiritual “melting pot”. BUT, we are not “Color Blind.” We appreciate the color and culture of others whom God has given different skin pigmentation and different family heritage.

Voddie Baucham's illustration of two ditches of error: one is color blindness (which is an impossibility in reality); the other is color wokeness, where skin color determines everything. Whiteness is perceived as systemically racist, evil and oppressive. But as believers, our Christian identity must supersede our cultural and racial identity.

"Melting pot" no longer an acceptable term according to the "woke" generation: That term is called "cultural imperialism", promoted by white supremacism.

Our tendency is to view the evangelical church in America through the lens of QLBC. We don't often attend other local churches. Maybe on vacation we do. What do we see? Shouldn't the cultural mix in the church reflect the local population?

Was slavery promoted in the Old Testament? No. But the Mosaic Law made provision for it. It wasn't a capital crime. Slavery could be the reward for crimes: Genesis 9:24-27. Ham would be an "Ebed" - servant or slave. Captured war enemies could be slaves. Debtors could be slaves. One could volunteer to be a slave in certain circumstances. Ex. 21:1-6.

Didn't Paul promote racial prejudice? Titus 1:5, 9-13. But this isn't racism (Cretan were a culture, not a race). Only a general truth. How can Paul be a racist, considering his commission to the Gentiles? See: Galatians 3:26-29.

But neither Jesus nor Paul spoke against slavery. In fact, Paul tells believers who were currently slaves to "obey" their masters. Ephesians 6:5-8. The Greek, "doulos," should always be translated "slave."

Slavery supported in Evangelical history:

- It removed the heathen from Satanic influence.
- It put the heathen under Gospel teaching.
- If they had a good master, they would be far better off.
- It would protect and provide for an intellectually inferior People.

Anti-Semitism throughout the Church Age:

- A view that the Jews were inherently criminals and permanent and eternal enemies of Christianity. (without God and without hope in the world)
- Slavery and annihilation are the just punishments for killing Jesus.

Anti-German, Anti-Japanese, and Anti-Muslim are the latest racist banners taken up in the name of righteousness. Did churches oppose

Japanese incarceration in WWII? The Quakers voiced their opposition; other denominations didn't, with mainline Protestant churches voting to keep Japanese congregations homogeneous. There were local churches around the camps that helped, though. See book, *Christianity, Social Justice, and the Japanese American Incarceration During WWII* by Anne Blankenship, Univ. of N. Carolina Press. 2016.

So, even though slavery has been abolished in all "civilized, Christian societies," it is still practiced worldwide under and above ground depending on the country and religion. Did you know that the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery has an exception clause that permits slavery to continue if a crime has been committed? And that it is still enforced? [penal system practice of forced servitude]

Slavery of African Americans may be gone in America, but racism is here to stay until the Lord returns. Satan is the great Adversary and man-hater. Note: illegal immigrant and sex slavery is still prevalent.

- B. Vs. 20: "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone," [meaning?]

What is a "cornerstone?"

God speaking doctrinal truth through His apostles and prophets and Jesus has given us our only rule of faith and practice. Jesus is the chief foundation stone, the final truth and authority upon which the apostles and prophets built. Heb. 1:1,2; 2:2,3. There is no other Head of the Church - no pastor, theologian, and certainly not the Pope himself.

This is the great danger of local churches, whether independent or not. The focus can shift from Jesus as head to Pastor as head (or synod).

- C. Vs. 21: "in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,"

"in whom" - in Christ, the recurrent two word theme of this whole letter. Used 12 times in this letter ("in Christ, in him, in whom").

Albert Barnes, "The different materials of the Jews and Gentiles; the people of various nations, though heretofore separated and discordant, become now united, and form a harmonious society. They believe the same doctrines; worship the same God; practice the same holiness: and look forward to the same heaven."

- D. Vs. 22: "in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

Why would God, the holy creator of the universe, want to dwell in us? There should be nothing more marvelous and humbling than this! Nothing is more motivating to repentance, obedience, thankfulness, joy and awestruck worship.

APPLICATION

- A. We have been brought near to God, included in His covenantal blessings.
- B. All believers are “in Christ” and equal as sons and daughters of God. There is no room for prejudice in our lives and especially in the Church.
- C. Christ alone is the foundation of the Church. His word reigns supreme in His kingdom - not our feelings, not the doctrines of men and angels.