



## Ephesians 2:11-22

### The Family of God

How good is your forgetter? Do you tend to forget the things you should remember and remember many things you wish you could forget?

In Ephesians 2:11 the apostle Paul begins a new paragraph asking us to remember something very important. What is it that is so important that he repeats the word twice in two verses?

There are important things he wants us to call to mind in verses 1-10 before he proceeds in applying these great truths to the church. Therefore remember takes us back to the immediate context in the first half of chapter two. In fact, he may even want to take us back to the beginning of the letter.

Remember that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ (Ephesians 1:3 NET). Remember God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we be holy and unblemished on his sight (v. 4 NET). Remember he predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the pleasure of his will (v. 5 NET). Remember, "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace (v. 7 NET). Remember " God has revealed to us the secret of his will (v. 9 NET) that was hidden down through the ages but now revealed in Christ. Remember you heard the gospel message and have been saved by grace. Remember " you have been marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit who is the down payment of our inheritance until the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory (vv. 13-14 NET). Remember the power of the resurrection of Christ is now working in your life (vv. 19-20). Remember, "you were dead in your transgressions and sins and have been made alive together with Christ —by grace you are saved! (2:1, 5 NET) Remember you are now seated with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (v. 6 NET).

Remember "by grace you are saved through faith and you are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand so we may do them (vv. 8, 10 NET).

In Ephesians 2:1-10 the contrast is like night and day. Remember, "you were dead in transgressions and sins (v. 1). This is the way you formerly lived under the power of Satan as sons of disobedience (v. 2). You were so evil that you were by nature the children of wrath. "Yes, that is true, the apostle says. Yes but God loved us being rich in mercy (v. 4), and saved us by His grace! (v. 5) He has made us alive together with Christ "and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (v. 6). We are his trophies of grace that will be on display throughout eternity (v. 7). You are God's new creation in Christ Jesus that he has created for good works (v.10). Please remember where you are coming from, and to whom you belong. You are a child of God. Always remember whose family you belong to.

In Ephesians 2:11-22 the apostle Paul builds on these great truths and expands the idea he stated in 1:22-23 regarding the Body of Christ. "And God put all things under Christ's feet, and he gave him to the church as

regarding the Body of Christ. "And God put all things under Christ's feet, and he gave him to the church as head over all things. Now the church is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23 NET).

Paul now returns to this theme and develops it further.

The apostle emphasizes the change that has taken place in the relationship of the Gentiles before and after they came to Christ.

## **YOU WERE OUTSIDERS (2:11-12)**

This is what your life was like before you came to Christ. Take a few moments and reflect upon your life before you put your trust in Christ as your personal Savior. What characterized your life style? How did you think, act and behave?

"Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh who are called *uncircumcision* by the so-called *circumcision* that is performed on the body by human hands that you were at that time without the Messiah, alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:11-12 NET).

Paul uses abstract words *circumcision* and *uncircumcision* to describe two groups of people. The Jewish people are the *circumcision*, and the non-Jewish or Gentiles are the *uncircumcision*. He brings out clearly in Galatians 5:6 that it really makes no difference at all because what matters is faith working through love. The physical cutting of the flesh was no true indication that the individual had a right relationship with God. It is the *circumcision of the heart* that makes a person right with God (Romans 2:25-29). What really matters is a new nature (Gal. 6:15).

### ***You were "separate from Christ" (vv. 11-12).***

Paul in addressing the Gentiles or non-Jews says you were *separate from Christ*. "

The non-Jews were outside the covenant of Israel (vv. 11-12). They were godless, Christless and hopeless. They had no chance of being saved. Salvation was a part of the covenant of God with Israel, and non-Jews were excluded. It is a heartbreaking picture of man outside of God.

Because of their fallen state they were not united to Christ by saving faith. That was just as true of the Jewish people. But the non-Jewish religions were totally pagan with no chance of hearing about the promise of the Messiah. They had no expectation of the coming Savior.

Moreover, by the time of the apostle Paul the Jews had an immense contempt for all non-Jews. They said the Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell; that God loved only Israel of all the nations of

Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell; that God loved only Israel of all the nations of the world. It was not lawful to render help to a Gentile woman in childbirth, for that would bring another Gentile into the world. If a Jew married a Gentile, the funeral of that Jew was carried out. It was a world of hate. Racial and religious hate.

They were spiritually dead. They were like a person visiting from a foreign country who does not understand a word of the native language. They had no idea of the promises of God, of His love, grace, mercy or eternal life.

### ***They were outside of Christ (vv. 12a-13).***

Paul writes, *you were at that time without the Messiah. The Gentiles had no hope of a Messiah or of salvation. They had never heard of the great prophecies in the Old Testament of the coming of the Messiah. They did not understand the purpose of the Jewish sacrifices and the hope of the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. The Gentiles before the coming of Jesus Christ were hopeless, having no hope and without God in the world (v. 12 NET). They had no hope in the promises in Genesis 3:15; Numbers 21:9; Deuteronomy 18:15, 18; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 7:14; 9:1ff; 52:13-53:12, Psalm 22, and those great passages in Zechariah. That is heart breaking. But it is still the tragic picture of billions of people in this world who have no hope and are without Christ. Without Christ there is nothing and all is lost. The best that can be said is No Exit. It is pure pessimism. There is no hope beyond the grave apart from the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

*You who used to be far away (v. 13 NET). Remember you were dead in trespasses and sins (v. 1). You were objects of God's wrath (v. 3).*

*They were without hope. What a personal tragedy when there is no hope and without God in the world (v. 12). They were practical atheists and agnostics.*

*Are you a Gentile without Christ and therefore without hope? That is the spiritual situation of every individual who has never put their trust in Jesus Christ.*

### ***NOW YOU ARE INSIDERS (vv. 13-14)***

*But now in Christ Jesus you who used to be far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ (v. 13 NET).*

*What a change. You were spiritually dead and now you are alive. You were far away and now you have been brought near.*

*Who is it that brings about this change? It is Christ Jesus. The historical person, Jesus of Nazareth who died on the cross and three days later rose from the dead is the anointed of the LORD. He is the true legitimate Messiah, and there can be no other.*

*Gentiles who were far away now have a vital union with the anointed of God. They are now in Christ Jesus. They are now in the inner circle. Those who were once far away have been brought near by means of the blood of Christ. The atoning sacrifice of the death of Jesus has removed all barriers to God.*

*In his letter to the church at Colosse Paul writes, "And you were at one time strangers and enemies in your minds as expressed through your evil deeds, but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you holy, without blemish, and blameless before him" (Colossians 1:21-22 NET). The*

death to present you holy, without blemish, and blameless before him" (Colossians 1:21-22 NET). The change takes place in the man, not God. It is the sinner who is turned to God.

The atoning death of Jesus Christ brings us near to God. In the past the Gentiles were separate from Christ, cut off from His blessings and salvation, but now in Christ they have a vital union with Him.

All who believed on Christ Jesus have come near in the blood of Christ. The apostle Paul has just demonstrated this is something man cannot do because of his sins. God did it for us in Christ death on the cross.

### ***Nearness of Christ***

These Gentile members of the church at Ephesus were "without Christ," and "now in Christ Jesus you . . ." Formerly, they were dead in trespasses and sins. They walked according to this world, under the prince of the power of the air. Now they were alive, quickened, raised, and seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Now they were near unto God. Formerly they were "without Christ." Now they were "in Christ Jesus." Formerly they were "far away," now they have been "brought near" to God in Christ.

Christ's position is one of nearness to God, and he makes us near to God. He gives us our place in the citizenship of God. We are now members of His kingdom, and His family.

For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith (Galatians 3:26 NET). What a change in our standing with God!

This nearness to God for the believer is thus secure in Christ. It comes by relationship when we are joined to Christ through faith so that we are quickened, resurrected, and exalted with him. In Christ we have the same relationship of nearness to God which he enjoys. What a blessing and encouragement it is when in the midst of our discouragements and our reticence because of failures or sins we are able to look away to this glorious fact that our position to God through the Lord Jesus Christ never changes. Christ dwelling in us brings about this nearness. This mystical indwelling of Christ is the secret of the Christian life of victory, of fellowship with God, and of the sense of nearness of God. Christ brings God to us and brings us to God. Nearness results in spiritual blessings. He who is near to God has access to his resources of blessing and help. Remember that the God and Savior of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. If, therefore, you would experience this nearness, draw near to God, that He may draw near to you, and in your experience you will know what being near to him means. It is an intimate personal experience with God himself.

### ***Wall of separation***

In the innermost part of the Temple was the Holy of Holies or Most Holy Place where symbolically the LORD God dwelt among His people. Only on one day of the year, the Day of Atonement, could the High Priest enter that room within the veil. Outside the veil was the Holy Place where the priest entered daily. The veil symbolized separation from God.

The apostle Paul has in mind the wall of separation that surrounded the inner courtyards in Herod's Temple in Jerusalem. The inner temple was separated by the Court of the Priests, where the priestly tribe of Levi entered to serve and offer sacrifices. Next was the Court of Israel where only Jewish males could enter, and beyond it the Court of Women where any Jewish person could enter. This was as far as any woman could go into the temple.

Josephus tells us five steps below the entrance into the Court of the Women was a five-foot stone barrier that enclosed the temple area and below that 14 more steps that descended to the Gentile Court. Paul is referring to a stonewall around the Court of the Gentiles with inscriptions stating that non-Jews could enter only upon the punishment of death.

Archaeologists actually discovered one of those tablets. It reads: 'Let no one of any other nation come within the fence and barrier around the Holy Place. Whosoever will be taken doing so will himself be responsible for the fact that his death will ensue. The Jewish leaders were serious about this requirement. Trespassers would be killed.

The ancient world was full of barriers.

But look what Christ did for us. He removed this hostile barrier. In the body of Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised (Col. 3:11). There is no longer any distinction spiritually. You are either in Christ or outside of Christ. You are either saved or lost. You cannot be both.

### **Christ our peace (v. 14)**

"For he is our peace, the one who made both groups into one and who destroyed the middle wall of partition, the hostility, when he nullified in his flesh the law of commandments in decrees. He did this to create in himself one new man out of two, thus making peace, and to reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by which the hostility has been killed (Ephesians 2:14-16 NET).

The apostle Paul teaches us the railings or fence erected for separation has been torn down by the cross of Jesus. It is a completed action in the past. It has been destroyed. Reconciliation has been accomplished (vv. 15-16). God and the sinner are at conflict because of sin. In salvation the believing sinner is brought into a state in which he is in submission and obedient to God.

In any Christless society there can be nothing but middle walls of partition and hostility. Watch the evening news on TV and you will have all the evidence you need. Walls build hate.

Christ destroyed the wall. How? Christ has made the two into one new man, thus establishing peace. It is new in quality because it did not exist before. Jesus did not make Gentiles into Jews, or Jews into Gentiles. He produced a new kind of person. This new corporate entity is united in Christ. It is his body.

We have peace with God through the blood of Jesus. We have been justified by faith. "Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1 NET). God has acquitted us because of what Christ did for us on the cross.

Sin separates man from God because God is holy. We are at enmity with God. Sin causes discrimination. The death of Jesus Christ removed the barrier between man and God. God has reconciled sinful man to Himself by means of the death of Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-21). The way is now open for man to approach God through faith in Christ.

Christ removed the barrier, the dividing wall between man and God. The door of salvation is wide open for all to enter by faith in Jesus Christ.

### **BROTHERS IN THE FAMILY OF GOD (vv. 15-22)**

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God has created a new body.

### ***We are reconciled into one body.***

We have been reconciled into one body to God through the cross (v. 16). Christ died to reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by which the hostility has been killed (NET).

The word *reconcile* means to bring together friends who have been estranged. It has the idea of reconciling completely, to change from one condition to another, so as to remove all hostility. There is no hindrance to unity and peace.

The basis for this reconciliation is the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In a parallel passage Paul wrote: "and through him to reconcile all things to himself by making peace through the blood of his cross through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And you were at one time strangers and enemies in your minds as expressed through your evil deeds, but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you holy, without blemish, and blameless before him" (Colossians 1:20-22 NET).

God has effected a change from a hostile to a friendly relationship. It is a bringing together again, a reuniting, and a reconnecting of the relationship. Christ through His atoning death has completely removed the enmity, and as a result complete harmony follows. The reconciliation is so complete that where there was formerly hostility there is now perfect fellowship. This is something that God has done in Christ Jesus. He took the initiative to accomplish reconciliation. It was God's initiative.

Sin and depravity alienated us from a holy God. Our sins have separated us from God. When Adam fell, we all fell down, and as a result were born in a state of separation. God in Christ reached down from heaven and made reconciliation. The Father sent His Son to the cross and died to make peace. Jesus bore the full punishment of our sins in His death to accomplish a full restoration with God.

Christ came and preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near" (v. 17 NET). When did Christ come and preach? It was the day when his apostle and missionaries arrived bearing the good news of Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 18:9-21, 24; 19:1).

We now have access to the Father (v. 18). Paul says it is "through him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father." In Romans 5:2 the apostle writes we have this access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God's glory (NET). Jesus Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, "who has sprinkled blood to cut a new covenant with God. He is our peace.

Once again the Trinity is implied here. The word *access* is used for introducing a person into the presence of the king. The idea is for someone to lead or bring another person into the presence of another of a higher rank. We have someone who takes us by the hand and leads us into the presence of the LORD God. We have someone we can break in upon, take our troubles to, our problems, our difficulties, our loneliness, and our sorrows. Because of Christ's faithfulness we have bold and confident access into God's presence. The Holy Spirit takes us into his presence.

### ***We are reconciled to one another.***

We are no longer strangers, outsiders, and aliens. Christianity transcends all the local cultural differences; it produces men who are friends with each other because they are friends with God. It produces men who are one because they meet in the presence of God to whom they all have access. We all come on the same level of acceptance –sinners saved by free grace.

You are fellow-citizens. So then you are no longer foreigners and noncitizens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household (Ephesians 2:19 NET). Gentiles are no longer foreigners, but full members of the family of God. No longer to be regarded with suspicion and dislike, but a full member of the community of God. "But our citizenship is in heaven and we also await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform these humble bodies of ours into the likeness of his glorious body by means of that power by which he is able to subject all things to himself" (Philippians 3:20-21 NET). What will that body of glory be like? Here we are told we will be like him! (cf. 1 John 3:2)

Have you ever been around someone who tries to create division, suspicion, or turns people against each other? There are some people who are never happy unless they are creating chaos for others. Christians on the other hand are peacemakers. They have a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

You are of God's household. So then you are no longer foreigners and noncitizens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household, because you have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22 NET).

It is through Jesus that we are made full members of the family of God. We are at home with him because of the work of Christ. You do not have to feel shut out, and lonely in the dark. There is a "we" feeling, a sense of belongingness that comes through being a part of the family of God.

## **SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**

1. When Jesus Christ comes into your life there is a dividing line, a change that takes place and you can look back upon your life before and after that event. This is what my life was like before I put my trust in Jesus Christ. This is the time and place when I trusted in Him and this is what my life has been like since. You cannot argue with a change person. What are changes Christ has brought about in your life?
2. When we fall in love with Jesus Christ we come to love each other. There can be peace only in and through Jesus Christ. Reconciliation with God involves and necessitates reconciliation with man.
3. When Jesus died on the cross he brought an end to legalism as a means of salvation and sanctification. He removed the fences when He abolished religion founded on rules and regulations. Jesus tore down the walls. Why in the world do we put up fences to keep people out of our lives, and our church?
4. When God saves us by grace it is always through faith in Jesus Christ. There is no other way but faith in Him. "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among people by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 NET). Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6 NET).
5. When Jesus Christ comes into your life He produces an altogether different kind of person. Jesus does not make all the Jews into Gentiles. Nor does He make Gentiles into Jews. He makes all men of all nations into Christians. Unity lies in oneness in Christ.

Christians. Unity lies in oneness in Christ.

6. It is tragic when the church is more exclusive than God.

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