

A. Introduction

1. what things characterize my life?

2. to what does the ‘therefore’ in verse 11 point?

B. The Situation Made Evident – 2:11

1. what was the position of Jews?^A

2. how did they regard Gentiles?

3. what dangers in these attitudes can affect the church?

C. Our Past Predicament – 2:12

1. we were without C_____^B
 - a. what is one way this shows itself?

2. we were outside of God’s P_____^C
 - a. how do the Jewish privileges translate to the Christian church?

3. we were outside of God’s C_____^D
 - a. what promises(s) are involved?

4. we were without H_____^E
 - a. what evidence of this do I see in people I know?

5. We were without G_____^F
 - a. how is this demonstrable?

D. Conclusion – 2:13

1. what is our present position?
 - a. it is in C_____
 - b. it is N_____

2. what effected this change?^G

^A Romans 3:1-2

^B John 1:11-13; Psalm 2:1-2, 12; John 4:25

^C Deuteronomy 4:7-8, 1 Peter 2:9

^D Galatians 3:17-19, Genesis 12:3, Galatians 3:13-14

^E 1 Thessalonians 4:13

^F Genesis 6:5

^G 1 Peter 1:18-19

—{1}. **Ephesians 2:11-13** **From Far To Near**

A. Introduction

1. we live at a hastened pace in a rushing and hurrying age
 - a. labour saving devices are intended to free up our time
 - b. then, we fill that free time with activities, with running to and fro, so that, literally, we don't have time to think
 - c. Ravi Zacharias —{2}. laments, 'One of the tragic casualties of our age has been {the loss} of the contemplative life – a life that thinks, thinks things through, and more particularly, thinks God's thoughts after Him. A person sitting at his desk and staring out the window would never be assumed to be working. No! Thinking is not equated with work.' He quotes Aldous Huxley's indictment, 'Most of one's life... is one prolonged effort to prevent thinking.', and, T. S. Eliot,
Where is the life we have lost in the living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
The cycles of heaven in twenty centuries
bring us farther from God and nearer to dust.
 - d. but not much has really changed over the millennia
 - (A) Isaac going out to meditate in the field was a minority
 - (B) our text today explains why people were unwilling to dwell upon the meaning of their life
 - (C) Socrates did, teaching that the unexamined life was not worth living. To spend life without pursuing its meaning, giving little thought to self-examination, being indifferent to the truth, he said, is something less than living. —{3}.
2. our text begins: 'Therefore remember...'
 - a. 'Therefore', because of what Paul has said in verses 1-10
 - (A) that before we became believers, we were dead, lost, slaves to sin and facing the punishment of God
 - (B) that God through salvation has resurrected us, raised us and made us to sit in the heavenly places

in Christ

- (C) that all this was by God's grace to accomplish His purpose for good works in our lives
- b. 'Therefore remember'; on account of these facts, reflect upon, consider what a change God has made to us
 - (A) we have been taken from being afar to being near
 - (B) we who without are now within and with
 - (C) we who were outsiders are now insiders
- c. let us reflect for a few moments this morning on the fact, the tremendous fact, that God has taken us out of past predicament into our present position in Christ Jesus

B. The Situation Made Evident 2:11

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) — (NIV)

- 1. Paul speaks now, in particular, to the Gentile believers ;
 - a. in the early church, this was the minority class
 - b. the first believers were Jews, and, perhaps for a decade or more, only Jews, until that day Peter visited Cornelius
 - c. so Jews predominated, the Jews who for centuries had, in contrast to the Gentiles, so many spiritual advantages: 'Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First {or, foremost} of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.' (Romans 3:1-2) – these were the people, the nation who demonstrably had special revelation from God
 - d. but, what were Gentiles? ... well, in eyes of the Jews
 - (A) these pagans, the heathen, were the 'uncircumcised'
 - (1) that was a very rude term, an insulting nickname, more derogatory than the translations convey
 - (2) it was a personal and a racial slur
 - (3) as nasty as any to be found in graffiti on walls
 - (B) William Barclay as student of this, says on this subject: 'The Jew had an immense contempt for the Gentile. The Gentiles, said the Jews, were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell. God, they said, loves only Israel of all the nations that he had made ... it was not even lawful to render help to a Gentile mother in her hour of sorest need, for that would simply bring another Gentile into the

world. Until Christ came, the Gentiles were an object of contempt to the Jews. The barrier between them was absolute. If a Jewish boy married a Gentile girl, or if a Jewish girl married a Gentile boy, the funeral of the Jewish boy or girl was carried out. Such contact with a Gentile was the equivalent of death.⁴

(C) the Judaizing teachers brought this attitude into the church; that's why Paul opposed them so fiercely

e. by the Ephesians was written, a generation had passed

(A) many knew of their pagan roots only intellectually

(B) so, Paul exhorts them, 'Therefore, remember.'

2. but what has this to do with us?

a. after 2 millennia of church history, Jewish Christians, sad to say, do not make up a noticeable part of our churches

b. nor does any exclusive attitude they may have offend us

c. for today's pagans, unbelievers, it is the church that forms the God-privileged society, who often reflect this 'holier than thou' attitude of exclusiveness

d. if we have been raised in a Christian family, we may easily forget our pagan background, forget we too were heathen

e. so, Paul's words are for us, too, 'Therefore, remember.'

C. Our Past Predicament 2:12

'remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.' (NIV)

1. the past predicament of Paul's audience

a. the Gentile believers in the church to which he wrote

b. and our past predicament are one and the same;

c. we were pagans

d. we were far off— away from God, away from His people

e. we were Outsiders; we didn't belong

f. Paul lists 5 ways in which we were without; were outside

- (A) we were without Christ
- (B) we were without Citizenship
- (C) we were without Covenants
- (D) we were without Hope
- (E) we were without God

2. We were Christless – without Christ – outside of Christ

a. '*remember that you were at that time separate from Christ*'

b. this is the great demarcation line of mankind

- (A) a person either has Christ; or does not
- (B) John draws this line boldly in John 1: 11-13: '*He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*'
- (C) human parentage did not define God's children but one's own personal reception of Christ as Saviour
- (D) before we receiving Christ, we were without Him, we were separated from Him; unbelieving, lost pagans

c. consider just one aspect of this fact: as pagans we had no expectation of God's Anointed, the Messiah, the Christ

(A) Psalm 2 depicts Israel's expectation of Messiah

- (1) when the heathen nations, the Goyim, oppressed: '*Why are the nations {Goyim} in an uproar...*'; when Israel, the Ammim, forsook God: '*And the peoples {Ammim} devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the Lord and against His Anointed*'; the faithful remnant could take comfort: *Do homage to the Son, ... How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!*' (Psalm 2:1–2, 12)

(B) even that mixed nation, the Samaritans – half Jew, half Gentile – as Carlos noted of the woman at the well: '*The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."*' (John 4:25) expected Messiah

- (C) but, for the Gentiles, as a class, excepting proselytes who had come to trust in Yahweh, there was no such expectation; no such comfort in time of difficulty
 - d. what was true then of the Jews is true of the church today
 - (A) Christians have the expectation of the returning Christ
 - (B) this has been a sustaining comfort to Christians in the face of persecution and martyrdom
 - (C) but is an expectation foreign to those without Christ when encountering the same situations
 - e. but it is not simply the loss of expectation, for you see, being without Christ, means the soul's loss, the loss of all
 - (A) for because we were pagans, heathen and undone
 - (B) we were outsiders to all the other items that follow
3. We were Stateless – outside of God's people
- a. *'remember that you were ... excluded from the commonwealth of Israel'*
 - (A) the word translated *'commonwealth'* can mean *'citizen'* or, as modified here by *'Israel'*, the people of God as living under the direct, divine rule or theocracy
 - (B) pagan rulers were autocratic, capricious, self-serving
 - (C) God's rule of His people was benign and blessed
 - b. Deuteronomy 4: 7-8 relates God's good plan was for Israel: *'For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?'*
 - (A) a nation marked by God being near to them
 - (B) a nation marked by God hearing their prayer
 - (C) a nation marked by justice – a just society
 - (D) what a blessing to be under such a ruler
 - (E) and in the church we find that rule of God carried on
 - (1) God the Father working all things in it to His will
 - (2) God the Son heading and leading it
 - (3) God the Holy Spirit ruling and guiding it
 - c. but we pagans were excluded from God's people
 - (A) we had no right of access to God in prayer

- (B) we had not the real justice, Christ's righteousness in us
- (C) we did not have the gentle leading of the Holy Spirit
- (D) and, we did not have the fellowship that comes from our being united with God's people as Peter now describes us, 'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light' (1 Peter 2:9)
- (E) we were outsiders

4. We were helpless – covenant-less – outside of God's covenants

- a. "*remember that you were ... and strangers to the covenants of promise*'
- b. God's covenants, not to be confused with man's treaties or contracts which are jointly negotiated, are His unilateral declaration of His intentions with respect to a nation or an individual. Sometimes they are conditional in the sense that the benefits promised are upon obedience, while punishment awaits disobedience, but they do not depend upon man but solely upon God for their fulfilment
- c. the focus in this verse is on the covenants of promise
- d. that means it is not the covenant of law that was given to the nation of Israel at Sinai; Galatians 3:17-19 states that that was not a covenant of promise: '*What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.*'
- e. no, as seen in that same verse, it is the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that is intended: the Messianic covenant of redemption: '*And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*' (Genesis 12:3)
- f. but as pagans, the promise of that covenant was of no benefit to us; we were still outside its application, we were not entitled to the benefits of covenant community
- g. but, just to look ahead for a minute, what a change to us when we come to Christ who '*... redeemed us ... in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*'! (Galatians 3:13, 14)

5. Hopeless – without hope – outside of Hope
 - a. *'remember that you were ... having no hope'*
 - b. Gentiles, as a class (though not some individuals, such as Cornelius), not only had no Messianic expectation or hope
 - (A) but no hope at all beyond this world
 - (B) at death they *'... have no hope'* (1Thess 4:13)
 - (C) in first century graveyards, archeologists have found many tombstones bearing the words *'No hope'*
 - (1) in the Roman world despair reigned everywhere
 - (2) philosophy despaired in a meaningless existence
 - (3) it was an age of suicide; *the Roman poet Catullus wrote: 'The sun can set and rise again but once our brief light sets there is one unending night to be slept through.'*^{5}.
 - (4) chasing, worshipping gods that were no gods
 - c. Two millennia later today's pagans have the same mind set
 - (A) living in the darkness of hopelessness and despair
 - (B) one reason for what was called the 'Cyclops' project, and SETI (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) is that to find a wiser, higher civilization that can solve all of our problems which we cannot
 - (C) we were pagans right alongside the rest, rejecting the God able to provide the solution to the root cause, sin
6. Godless – without God – outside of God
 - a. *"remember that you were ... without God in the world.'*
 - b. Adam and Eve dwelt in God's garden east of Eden
 - (A) enjoying an intimate relationship with Him
 - (B) maybe for days, weeks, months or even years
 - (C) but when they sinned (and so we too sinned in them)
 - (D) that fellowship was broken; that intimacy was over
 - (E) they were banished from His garden and Presence

- c. the Bible is a graphic record of that separation & its effect
 - (A) as mankind has turned further and further from God
 - (B) 'Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' (Genesis 6:5)
 - (C) history confirms the Bible record, documenting strife, crime, war, murder, cruelty and atrocity in a world without God, without His justice, His love
- d. that was our world, the pagan world; but now ...

D. Conclusion: Our Present Position – Near (Close) Inside 2:13
 'But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.'
 (NIV)

1. Now we are in Christ; what a difference!
 - a. recognizing the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, then we were taken into that covenant of redemption, of promise
 - b. what a change has taken place! what a transition!
 - c. faster than the speed of light we were transported from being afar to being near; near to God; near to His people
 - d. take all those 'without's' and make them 'with's'
 - e. take all that made us 'less' and change it to 'more'
 - f. take all that placed us 'outside' and put us 'inside'
 - g. for we have been brought near through the blood of Christ

2. what has effected this change? ... the blood of Christ

What can wash away my sin?
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
 What can make me whole again?
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
 Oh! Precious is the flow
 That makes me white as snow;

No other fount I know,

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.—{6}.

- a. ‘... you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood ... of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18-19)
- b. that price of His blood has bought us from the bonds of slavery to this world and bonded us into the family of God

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. ‘Where is the Wisdom’ by Ravi Zacharias in ‘A Slice of Infinity’ – Kerux illustration # 33620
3. Adapted from ‘Now Give Thought’ by Jill Carratini – Kerux illustrations #29526
4. ‘The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians’ in the Daily Study Bible, page 125, by William Barclay (The Saint Andrew Press, 1954, 2nd edition, 1958) quoted by John R. W. Stott, in ‘God’s New Society, the Message of Ephesians’
5. Quoted in “The Walls Come Down” by Rev. Coy Wylie – Kerux sermons #10563
6. ‘Nothing But the Blood’ by Robert Lowry (1826-1899)