

Purpose and Meaning in Life

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[0 : 00] And at verse 13, Ephesians 2, verse 13, But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Now there's a wonderful clarity about Christianity which is so helpful to us. Because quite simply, a person is either a Christian or they are not.

There is really no in-between place. There is quite clear, the Bible is very clear, that a person is either in Christ or they are out of Christ.

A person may have great sympathy for the Christian faith and yet not be a Christian. A person may indeed want to build their life on Christian principles and yet not be a Christian.

And by that means that they have not come into a personal saving union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Either a person has Christ or they don't.

[1 : 13] And the chapter here makes it very clear that out of Christ a person is far off. In Christ a person has been taken near.

Out of Christ far off. In Christ taken near. Now Paul, of course, was writing to Ephesians who had once been very much steeped in idolatry. But of course the great work of the gospel had come in and broken into their lives.

And of course they had been brought close to the Lord. But the Bible makes it clear that irrespective of how a person feels or a person assesses things or a person thinks, that unless we have Christ, we are far off.

It might not be something people want to accept or to believe, but that doesn't alter the situation. We've got to take what the Word of God says. And I want us this morning very briefly just to look at the former state of the believer before they were converted is one of being far off.

And then the present state or the present condition which is near. And the means by which they were brought near by the blood of Christ. Something that's all very clearly set out for us here.

[2 : 34] Now by nature, the way people are without the Lord Jesus Christ, we see that they are far off. And to define something of what that far off is, we find that the previous verse makes it very clear.

And it's grim reading because we see that a person who is far off is somebody who is separated from God, who is alienated. They are strangers, they have no hope, and they are without God in this world.

And when you read that, you say to yourself, that's about as bleak as it can come. Separated from God, strangers, alienated, without God, and without hope in this world.

And that's why we have to take what God's Word says rather than how we feel. Because there are many people who will feel that everything is all right with them. There might even be people in here today who feel that everything is all right, and yet they're away from the Lord.

But there are many people who have no concerns, no thoughts about the Lord, and they are far away from Him. The church in Laodicea thought that everything was fine with them.

[3 : 48] It wasn't. They said, we have need of nothing, and the Lord's assessment of them was so incredibly different. Jesus talks about a man who decided to pull down his barns and build bigger ones.

His life was going very well, very prosperous. But he had one glaring fault. God was not in his thinking. He never thought about God. And as he was busy making the plans about prospering even more, the Lord was saying to him, You fool, this night your soul is going to be required of you.

And we've got to remember that, that ultimately, how we are before God is what counts in this world.

That is the most important thing of all. So we see here that those who are without Christ are far off. And everybody in here today, by nature, that's how we were.

There are many people at the Lord's table, and they are testifying by being there. And we believe there are others in this congregation, maybe many others in the congregation, who could be at the table.

[4 : 58] Because Jesus Christ is their Savior. And yet they haven't publicly confessed and professed. And we pray that they will be brought on to the place where they will be enabled to do that.

But the fact is that by nature, as we are by nature, we are far off. We are far off from God's favor. Now, that's a solemn thought.

Because when we go back earlier in the chapter, we are told how it is for those who are far off, that they are children of wrath. Now, that's a solemn thought.

Children of wrath. That God's wrath is hanging over people. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, and remember, they were expelled from the garden, there was the Lord set there an angel, an angel with a flaming sword of fire, debarring them from coming back in, debarring them from the tree of life.

Well, there is something even worse hanging over us by nature, which is God's wrath. And again, we're far off in our affections.

[6 : 14] Because those who are without the Lord Jesus Christ do not have an interest in the things of God.

There are many people today who cannot understand. Many people who cannot for the life of them understand why you have come to church today.

There are many people whose thoughts do not even come near coming to church. Because they have no interest in God's word, in God's house.

They have no interest in opening God's word and reading it, or studying it, or discussing it, or meeting with other of God's people to try and find out more about the Lord.

These things don't come into their thinking because they are far off. Their affections, their desires are far off. And it's a great thing when you see in a person a growing desire for the things of God.

[7 : 17] A person who has picked up his Bible or her Bible and has begun to read. A growing interest in coming to God's house. A desire to find out more about the truth.

That is one of the most encouraging things to see. Because you are saying to yourself, The Lord, the Lord must be doing this. The Lord must be working in this person's heart.

And it's such an encouraging thing to see. But what people don't understand is that the person who has developed this interest in the things of God hasn't just decided one day, Well, in the way that we often do, decide to turn over a new leaf, or decide to do this, or to decide to do that.

It's more than that. You see, the thing is that when we come to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, we have entered into a new relationship.

A relationship like the relationship of a son with a father. The relationship that we have of a subject with a king.

[8 : 21] The relationship that we have of bride and bridegroom. It's a real relationship. It's a powerful relationship. It's a personal relationship.

So you see, without Christ, it's an awful place. It is far off. And it sums it up by saying, Without God, and without hope in this world.

Now hope, hope is something that, I suppose it's one of the great aspirations in life. We all have hope in life. If we didn't have hope in life, life would be very bleak.

And we often find that we find ourselves saying, Well, I'm hoping for a better future. I'm hoping for a change in circumstances. If you're ill, you're hoping for better health.

And when there's hope, you cope. But you imagine taking hope away. To take hope away from a person.

[9 : 20] It leaves that person so bleak, so empty. And that is what the word is showing us here. The person who is far away is not only empty, but in a condition of lostness.

But then we see the present state of the Christian, and we find that they have been made near. They have been brought near. And it's lovely the way that the verse begins, but it says, Now, in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near.

But now. That's the way it was. Strangers, alienated. They were without God and without hope in the world. But now.

It's changed. And how has it changed? Well, it's the Lord who changed it. You and I do not have either the inclination or the power within ourselves to change things.

We do not one day say, Ah, well, that's it. You know, today, I'm going to become a Christian. End of story. And just decide in that way that that's it. Sometimes, and that's not what we're going into just now, because, of course, through the Lord's drawing, people will come to that place where they commit their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him by faith.

[10 : 47] But, taking it in its natural way, it is something that is supernatural. It is all of the Lord. Because, you see, if I had the power to make myself right before God, then Jesus Christ need not have come into this world.

If you, today, could have made yourself right with God, we wouldn't be sitting here. There would be no need for the gospel. There would be no need for any of these things, because we would be able to sort it out and have it right between ourselves and God.

But it's because we cannot that Jesus came into this world. For, you see, it's by grace we are saved. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all involved in this great salvation.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ, He came into this world to save us, and He came into this world by way of a covenant. And a covenant, as you know, is a solemn agreement between two parties.

If you enter into a covenant, there's this solemn agreement made between two parties.

Now, as when God made Adam, and Adam and Eve lived in this world before the fall, we term, we call it, that they lived under, or Adam lived under, what was termed the covenant of works.

[12:17] In other words, Adam was made in the image of God in knowledge, in righteousness, and in holiness. And as Adam was, he was able to fulfill the law of God.

He was able to keep the commands of God. He did what God required of him. And so, in that state, Adam lived as God would have him live.

Now, Adam was a covenant head. In other words, what Adam was, we were, or we were to become. Now, you and I know that Adam fell.

Adam had the ability to fulfill and to obey, and God said to Adam, do this and you will live. Disobey me and you will die.

And as the head, he disobeyed, and God said, the day that you eat, you will die. And that is where death and sin and all the pain and all the misery and all the havoc came into this world.

[13:28] but Jesus Christ has also come into this world by way of a covenant. And that is why he is called the second Adam or sometimes the last Adam. But you see, the wonderful thing is that he, that a covenant, he has come also, as we say, by way of a covenant, but the covenant that God made, he made with his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, on your behalf and my behalf.

God didn't make the covenant with us because we couldn't keep it. We couldn't, we were incapable of keeping it. Christ is the basis of our salvation.

Christ is the covenant keeper. Isn't that wonderful? That God said, I am going to make a new covenant and I'm going to make a covenant that is going to affect the human race.

But I can't make it with the human race because they're incapable. They have sinned, they've fallen. But I am going to make this covenant with my son who is going to come in human nature and he is going to stand in the room and in the stead of sinners.

He is going to be the representative. He's going to be their substitute. And that's who Jesus is and that's what Jesus has done. And so Jesus is the foundation of this covenant.

[14:59] God has made, we could say, a covenant with God. And it's because of this work that you and I have been brought near.

There is now no hindrance. The barrier has been removed. The wrath has been taken away. We are no more separated from God.

But we've been brought near. We are close to Him. And it's not a wonderful thought. Even although today you may feel far away from the Lord, you're not.

You may feel today, you may have come in here and you say to yourself, Oh, I feel so far away. But even although you may feel far away, there is a real sense in which you are not far away.

Today is an absolutely beautiful day. We've had the most wonderful spell over these last few weeks. Sun is shining. We see it. It's there. It's clear for us to see.

[16:03] We can feel its warmth. It makes us feel better. We can see the effect of it not only upon ourselves but upon others.

But there are other days and they'll come. We have loads of them. And there's other days and it'll be really cloudy and it'll be dark. And we cannot see the sun and we cannot feel its warmth.

But it's still there. It's just the clouds that are in the way. And similarly that's how it is between ourselves and the Lord. He is still there.

We have been brought near. But sometimes the clouds of sin sometimes the clouds of circumstances the various things come between ourselves and the Lord so that we do not experience the light and the warmth and things that at other times we do.

But the fact is that we have been brought near. and in having been brought near we now have experienced his peace his grace.

[17:12] We know what it is to have a sense of belonging this sense of identity. We know who we are in this world.

You know that's one of the wonderful things of becoming a Christian is knowing who you are. Naturally speaking we always want to know who we are.

I suppose now that it used to be long ago if you went to maybe another part of the island or something people would say who do you belong to?

They would want to know because once you began to tell who you belong to and often people gave their name by giving their father's name and their grandfather's name and their great grandfather's name.

There was this sense of belonging. People knew their identity who they belonged to, who they came from and that's often how people were known. And it's a wonderful thing to have this identity, this sense of belonging.

[18:12] But you know, spiritually, when a person becomes a Christian, we have this wonderful sense of identity in this world.

We belong to the Lord and we know it. We know why we're here and we know where we're going. And that gives so much purpose and meaning to life.

So many people are asking the question, what's it all about? Why am I here? People feel there is a sense of lostness in this world. People aren't able to understand that's what they're experiencing, but that is what they're experiencing.

It's wonderful to know this sense of belonging, this sense of love, this sense of purpose. And we see how this change took place by the blood of Christ.

Now, of course, blood is at the heart of everything. Blood is at the heart of the covenant. You see, when a covenant was made, it was a covenant of life and death.

[19:18] Life for obedience and death for disobedience. And that is why there was no alternative but for Jesus Christ to die.

Because death, death was what was in the covenant. Life or death. death. Now, of course, when the Lord Jesus Christ came, as we said, he came as a covenant head.

And he took upon himself our failure, our weakness, our sin, our transgression. He took upon us the perverseness of all that we are.

He took upon himself all our frailty, all our guilt. Can you imagine it? If we were able today to be able to quantify, if we were able in some way to bring it together and be able to see it in a great bulk, in a great shape, all our guilt, all our sin, all our iniquity, if we were able to in some way pile it up and see it, and then put it on top of ourselves, you know this, it would destroy us.

But Jesus has taken that upon himself. That's what he did. It's extraordinary, and it's no wonder that the Christian experiences release and freedom and liberty.

[20:50] They had known it before, but now there's this wonderful freedom and liberty. So Christ's death was covenantal. Now as you know in the Old Testament, which was all a picture symbolizing and typifying what Jesus Christ was to do, the one thing that was at the center of it all was blood.

Whether it was a lamb or a bullock or a goat, whatever it was, there was all was blood. And that was brought so forcibly before the Israelites.

Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. And you know, sadly, there are people today who want to be at peace with God.

They want heaven, but they want it without the blood. In other words, they want salvation without accepting Christ. And if we don't accept Christ, we're trying to come by another way other than the way of the blood, other than the way of the covenant, and we cannot.

And you know, it's an insult to God to say, well, I can come my own way. I can do my own thing. When God in his love revealed to us our condition, and God in his love made provision for our condition, and God in his love draws us in order that we may come to know Jesus Christ as our own Savior.

[22 : 19] Blood. Blood, of course, speaks of life, and blood speaks of death. That's what Jesus did. He gave himself. It's very beautifully held out before us on the day of atonement, where there was a public and a private work.

And that's exactly what Jesus did on the cross with his blood. On the day of atonement, there was the sacrifice. It was public, but there was a private part to it where the high priest went on the only day of the year, and he entered into the most holy place, into the holy of holies, with the blood, to present it before God.

Nobody else could see it. And the people could see how God accepted it as he returned and made his way back before the people.

And similarly, there was a public and the private work with Jesus. Jesus on the cross, he was crucified in the most public way possible. people, where everybody saw him, he was lifted up, and he was there making sacrifice for sin.

But the private part where the wrath of God was being poured upon Jesus, no eye could see that. Where Jesus' sacrifice was being accepted, where his blood was being presented before the Father, nobody could see that, except the Father.

[23 : 52] it was a private transaction that was being taken place for so many people. And again, proof of God's acceptance of this is surely Jesus is rising from the dead as he rose and came back and displayed how God had accepted this great work.

Well, my friends, that's what it's all about. We could go on and on and on and it's a subject that is tireless and so it should be because our life, our future, our eternity depends upon it.

Have you, let me finish with this great question, have you accepted this great Savior as your own? Have you come to our knowledge of Christ as Savior?

It doesn't matter whether you've come suddenly or whether you've come gradually. The question is, have you come to that knowledge? It is imperative that you do, imperative that you come to know Jesus as your own Lord and Savior.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends. And Jesus lay down his life for us when we were his enemies in order to make us his friends.

[25 : 21] Let us pray. Oh, Lord our God, we pray that what Jesus has done may indeed truly enter into our heart, that we may come to an ever greater persuasion of this great sacrifice for sin.

We pray to bless each one of us, continue with us, we pray, guide us and enrich our lives, have mercy on us and forgive us for Jesus' sake. Amen.