

Ephesians 2:11-19

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Date: 13 November 2016

Preacher: Nick Lauer

[0:00] Ephesians chapter 2, we're going to look at verses 11 through 19 tonight. We're going to take two weeks to look at this next section of Ephesians tonight.

We're just going to focus on 11 through 19. All right, let me read this for us. Paul says this, he says, 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, 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 he 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.

Let's pray together. Oh, Lord God, now as we turn to your word, God, we ask that by your spirit you'd give us understanding of these things.

[1:57] Lord, we trust that your word is like a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path. Lord, it's also bread for our souls, for our hungry, hungry souls.

God, so would you feed us and would you lead us tonight through your word. And Lord, may the meditations of my heart and the words of my mouth, Lord, and the meditations of all of our hearts together as we feast on this word be acceptable in your sight.

Oh, Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen. Amen. Well, I think it would be an understatement to say that it's been quite a week for us.

In the aftermath of Tuesday's election, it's become almost commonplace now in the media to observe how divided we seem to be as a country.

Many are feeling politically, socially, economically alienated. Just today I was driving across Elm Street and I saw some folks protesting on the courthouse steps.

[3:09] But of course, it hasn't just been over the past week, has it? I think over the last year plus, our country has seen how racism is still alive and well, causing alienation and injustice and hurt and harm.

And many of our brothers and sisters in the African-American community feeling alienated in many ways. But even so, it hasn't just been the last year, has it?

Hasn't even been just the last decade. In fact, if you look over the course of human history, the more and more you study it, the more and more you see a story of human animosity and alienation and hostility.

It almost seems like it's impossible for us humans to live together in peace. And I wonder if most of us looking at the past and the present, I think most of us sense deep down that this state of things isn't the way it's supposed to be, right?

We humans shouldn't live this way, always in a state of hostility and anxiety and animosity. It's not supposed to be this way. And at the same time as we realize that this isn't the way it's supposed to be, I think we also realize that some of our perhaps deeply held beliefs may not, after all, hold water.

[4 : 31] After all, if history tells us that human beings almost never live together in peace, can we really still say and believe that people are really down, just basically good?

And looking at our own history, can we really say that if we just try hard to pursue the greatest good for the greatest number of people that we can eventually get ourselves out of this mess that we are in?

Maybe with enough education, enough economic prosperity, enough just laws, maybe then we'll find our way to peace. Of course, all those things, education, prosperity, just laws, those are all good things, right?

All things that we should and ought to pursue, but are they really deep down the solution? In our passage tonight, Paul thrusts us headlong into this great human predicament that we find ourselves in.

And what we see here in this text is that God himself is working to bring about peace. In the midst of our fractured humanity, God has a plan to unite us and to reconcile us.

[5 : 53] We see here that in the gospel in Christ, there actually is an answer to this human problem. So let's look again then at these verses together.

And you'll notice that these verses are structured a lot like verses 1 through 10 were structured. We spent the last three weeks studying verses 1 through 10 of chapter 2. And we saw there that those verses had a sort of then-now structure.

Paul says, here's what you once were, but now here's what you are in Christ. You were once spiritually dead, but now God has made you alive.

That's chapter 2, verses 1 through 10. But here in our passage tonight, there's another then-now that's happened as a result of Christ. Paul sums it up in verse 13. Look there, he says, you once were far off, but now you've been brought near.

And at the heart of our passage is how God accomplishes that in Christ. So let's look first then at this former condition.

[7 : 02] What we Christians once were apart from Christ. And then second, we're going to look at what Christ has done in light of that. And then third, we're going to look at the result, the now. So first, let's look at our former condition.

What we once were. Look again at 11 and 12. 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. Paul says, remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the governance of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Now, Paul here in this letter is writing to a predominantly Gentile, non-Jewish audience. And he's reminding them here in these verses that before hearing about Christ and before putting their trust in him, after hearing the proclamation of the good news of the gospel, he says, before all that happened, you were spiritual outsiders.

You were separated. You were alienated, he says. You were strangers. You were strangers. Well, separated from what, we ask? And he's got a list there.

From Christ. From the commonwealth of Israel. From the people of God. From the covenants of promise. Paul's reminding us here that there is a history of redemption.

- [8 : 22] That God's saving plan for all the world took place in history and is unfolding in history. And that that history began way back with Abraham's family.
- And that God, through his mighty and gracious covenants, call the people into existence. Beginning with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And then the whole family, the whole commonwealth of Israel, as Paul puts it here.
- And it was in accordance with those covenants. And it would be through that commonwealth of people that God's Christ would come.
- The great king. The great rescuer. Paul's reminding us here that before the gospel came to us, we were strangers to all that.
- Far off, he says. Here was this dream of God's healing, redemptive plan in history. And we were a mile away.
- [9 : 25] Or as he puts it at the end of verse 12, without hope and without God in the world. It's quite a picture, isn't it? Hopeless and godless.
- If you're here and you are a Christian, I wonder if maybe you can remember what your life was like before coming to know Christ.
- I don't know about you, but I know it's true for me that before I became a Christian, I was certainly without hope and without God in the world. And you know, the scary thing was, is I didn't even realize it.
- If you're here and you're not a Christian, I wonder how this... I don't know. Thank you.
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- [13 : 38] Thank you.
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