

PEACE AND UNITY IN CHRIST, PT. 1; EPH. 2:11-12 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE ARE BEGINNING A DETAILED STUDY OF THE NEXT SECTION OF Ephesians, ~ 2:11-22.

- ▶▶ However, ~ before we get into this paragraph, ~ it would be good, ~ in order to keep the big picture of Ephesians in mind, ~ to once again set the overall context of the letter.
- ▶▶ As said, ~ Ephesians can be divided into three consecutive overarching themes.
 - ▷▷ The first central theme is brought out in [chapters 1-3](#). ~ In short, ~ Paul explains the doctrine of salvation and its accompanying blessings.
 - ▷▷ The second overarching theme is brought out in ~ [4:1 - 6:9](#), ~ in which Paul highlights and describes ~ [how we, ~ who have been given this salvation and its accompanying blessings, ~ are to live as a result.](#)
 - ▷▷ The third central theme of Ephesians is brought out in [6:10-20](#), ~ and deals with the spiritual warfare of the Christian. ~ Ok overall context. ~ And continue encourage read.

NOW LET'S TURN OUR ATTENTION TO A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THIS NEXT PARAGRAPH in Ephesians, ~ 2:11-22, ~ in order to set the context ~ and see how it all fits together.

▶▶ Overall, ~ when we compare [verses 1-10](#) with [verses 11-22](#), ~ we can see that [verses 1-10](#) covered individual persons in relation to God; ~ ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and [verses 11-22](#) cover Gentiles, ~ or non-Jews, ~ as a whole in relation to the Jewish people and both groups as a whole to God. ~ Church as individual. ~ As corporate body.

▶▶ Then briefly zeroing in on [verses 11-22](#) in our overview, ~ Paul begins by urging us to remember certain aspects of our unsaved life. ~ Paul subsequently explains in detail how [Jesus rectified our unsaved condition.](#)

▷▷ He teaches us that and how God has brought believing Gentiles into a relationship with Himself, ~ has reconciled believing Jews and Gentiles, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ reconciled both groups to Himself ~ and united believing Jews and Gentiles into one new body, ~ the church.

↪↪ As Paul says in 1 Cor. 12:13a, ~ NASB ~ "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, ~ whether Jews or Greeks, ~ whether slaves or free." ¶¶ 1/9

▷▷Paul also points out some of the results and draws out some implications from what he says in this section.

▶▶One lesson we learn here, ~ when we take this passage as a whole, ~ and we'll see this as we move through the passage, ~ **is that we do not become spiritual lone rangers when God saves us.**

▷▷When we become Christians, ~ we become part of a family, ~ a people. ~~ We belong to and need each other.

▷▷In 1 Pet. 2:5a, ~ Peter tells us Christians, ~ "you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, ~ to be a holy priesthood."

↳↳We are not being built up as individual houses, ~ individual priesthods. ~~ The whole church together is "being"

▷▷And look at how Luke describes the very early church in Acts 2:44-47a.

↳↳"And all who believed were together ~ [i.e., ~ they all met together in one place] ~ and had all things in common ~ [i.e., ~ they shared with one another equitably]. ~~ ¶¶

→→And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, ~ as any had need. ~~ ¶¶

↳↳And day by day, ~ attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes ~ [i.e., ~ they worshiped and ate and fellowshiped together], ~ ¶¶

↳↳they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ~ praising God and having favor with all the people."

NOW, ~ LET'S SET THE OVERALL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND FOR 2:11-22.

▶▶We'll get into more of the details as we move through the passage, ~ but a birds-eye view of the historical background will help us better understand what Paul is talking about.

▶▶Before Christ's coming, ~ Jews and Gentiles kept apart from each other. ~~ There was a barrier between them, ~ and that barrier was absolute.

▶▶Jews considered Gentiles beyond God's saving power and therefore without hope.

▷▷Jews had an immense contempt for Gentiles.

▷▷They said the Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of Hell. ¶¶ 2/9

▷▷ They also said of all the nations that he had made, ~ God loved only Israel.

▷▷ If a Jew married a Gentile, ~ the funeral of that Jew was carried out. ~~ Such contact with a Gentile was the equivalent of death.

▷▷ Even to go into a Gentile house rendered a Jew unclean. ~~ Read [Acts 10 and 11](#) ~ and note the reaction that Peter got in Jerusalem for going into Cornelius' house.

▶▶ For their part, ~ Gentiles resented Jewish claims of their position of superiority based on their heritage.

▶▶ Jesus revealed the total sinfulness of both Jews and Gentiles, ~ and then He offered the gift of salvation to both.

▶▶ Before Christ came the barriers were up; ~~ after Christ shed His blood, ~ the barriers were down.

▷▷ Before Christ came, ~ there was no hope of unity; ~~ through Christ's shed blood, ~ unity has been achieved.

↪↪ Only Jesus breaks down the walls of prejudice between Jew and Gentile, ~ reconciles both groups to God and to each other, ~ and unifies us within one body.

OKAY, ~ LET'S BEGIN OUR LOOK THIS NEXT SECTION.

TODAY, ~ WE'LL ZERO IN ON VERSES 11-12.

▶▶ Just as he did in [verses 1-3](#), ~ Paul begins this next section of Ephesians with a description of our unsaved condition.

▶▶ ^{11a} "Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, ~ ^{11b} called 'the uncircumcision' by what is called the circumcision, ~ which is made in the flesh by hands — ^{11c} [↵↵](#)

▷▷ ^{12a} remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, ~ ^{12b} alienated from the commonwealth of Israel ^{12c} and strangers to the covenants of promise, ~ ^{12d} having no hope ^{12e} and without God in the world."

▶▶ If you'll notice, ~ Paul begins to call us to remembrance, ~ inserts a parenthetical comment in [verse 11b](#), ~ then begins again, ~ so we can combine [verse 11a](#) with [verse 12](#) ~ and focus on what Paul wants us to remember.

▷▷ And we'll do that in a few minutes. [↵↵ 3/9](#)

▶▶ The phrase "Gentiles in the flesh" holds no special significance other than identifying us by birth. ~ It could be paraphrased as "Gentiles by birth," ~ as the NIV has it.

▶▶ And the phrases "at one time" and "at that time" refer to our unsaved past.

LET'S BRIEFLY CONSIDER PAUL'S PARENTHETICAL COMMENT IN VERSE 11b, ~ THAT Gentiles are "called 'the uncircumcision' by what is called the circumcision, ~ which is made in the flesh by hands."

HERE PAUL WAS MOST LIKELY JUST FURTHER IDENTIFYING THE DIFFERENCE between Gentiles and Jews.

▶▶ Paul's focus in this paragraph is not on circumcision, ~ but it might help us understand this paragraph if we make some concise comments.

▷▷ The Jews had the privilege of being God's chosen nation to whom He had given His covenant promises.

↳↳ As pointed out in Deut. 7:6. ~ "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. ~ The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, ~ out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

▷▷ And one of the signs of God's covenant was circumcision.

↳↳ Pious Jews ("the circumcision") considered all non-Jews ("the uncircumcision") to be ceremonially unclean.

↳↳ The Jews erred in believing that physical circumcision ("which is made in the flesh by hands") ~ was sufficient to make them godly without the necessity of inner renewal.

→→ You can read Paul's discussion of this in Rom. 2:25-29. ~ But here in 11b

IN VERSES 11-12, ~ PAUL CALLS UPON US, ~ GENTILE BELIEVERS, ~ TO REMEMBER five things that described our unsaved condition.

LET'S FIRST CONSIDER THE WORD "REMEMBER" HERE, ~ BEFORE WE GET INTO THE five things that Paul wants us to remember.

▶▶ The remembering Paul calls believers to do ~ is meant not only to include mental recall, ~ but also, ~ in the process, ~ is meant to lead us to ~ ¶¶

▷▷ a greater appreciation for what God has done to change our past ~ and also to a greater appreciation for the present and eternal results of that reversal. ¶¶ 4/9

▶▶Furthermore, ~ the form of the verb Paul uses for "remember" shows that he is urging us to continue to remember five things about our unsaved condition.

▶▶Paul's call to "remember" ~ is reminiscent of the many times that the Israelites were called to remember the mighty deliverance God had secured for them ~ following their years of painful slavery in Egypt.

▷▷E.g., ~ Ex. 13:3a, ~ "Then Moses said to the people, ~ ~ 11

↳↳Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, ~ out of the house of slavery, ~ for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place."

▷▷Israel's failure to remember God's mighty works and his powerful acts of deliverance often resulted in a failure ~ to appreciate God, ~ to obey him in their present situation, ~ and to keep themselves pure.

↳↳For instance, ~ in Ps. 106:7, ~ the psalmist writes, ~ "Our fathers, ~ when they were in Egypt, ~ did not consider your wondrous works; ~ ~ 11

→→they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, ~ but rebelled by the sea, ~ at the Red Sea."

▷▷The warning is for us, ~ Christians in the 21st century, ~ as well. ~ ~ Our failure to remember God's wondrous work and powerful act of salvation in our lives ~ 11

↳↳will often result in our failure to appreciate God, ~ our failure to obey him in our present situation, ~ and our failure to keep ourselves pure.

▶▶On the other hand, ~ forgetfulness can lead to spiritual pride

IN VERSE 12a, ~ THE FIRST THING PAUL SAYS TO CONTINUALLY REMEMBER ~ IS THAT we were "separated from Christ" when we were unsaved.

▶▶Now, ~ Paul is not saying that all Jews are saved. ~ ~ He makes this clear in Rom. 3:9b. ~ ~ "For we have already charged that all, ~ both Jews and Greeks, ~ are under sin."

▷▷He's just highlighting our unsaved condition in verse 12, ~ so just mentions us.

▶▶Greek text indicates that Paul is emphasizing our previous lack of a relationship w/ Jesus.

▷▷This shows us that being separated from Jesus is the worst problem of all about being unsaved. 11 5/9

▷▷ Think about it.

↪↪ Since every spiritual blessing of 1:4-12 is available only to those who have a saving relationship with Jesus, ~ and since rescue from the grim plight Paul detailed in 2:1-3 comes only through a saving relationship with Jesus, ~ ¶¶

→→ then being "separated from Christ" is indeed the worst problem of all of our unsaved condition.

▷▷ Because, ~ when a person, ~ Jew or Gentile, ~ is "separated from Christ" ~ it means that they are 100% sinful, ~ sinning is a way of life for them, ~ they are following the standards of this world and Satan, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ they are enslaved to their sinful nature and its sinful desires ~ and are carrying those sinful desires out daily, ~ ¶¶

→→ and most tragically of all, ~ they are subject to, ~ deserving of, ~ and destined for ~ God's wrath.

▶▶ And again, ~ my fellow believers, ~ as we know full well, ~ that was our condition before God saved us.

▷▷ Paul wants us to never forget that horrible and terrifying condition, ~ in order that we develop a greater appreciation for our salvation and its accompanying blessings.

IN VERSE 12b, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT WE ARE TO CONTINUALLY REMEMBER ~ THAT IN our unsaved state, ~ we were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.

▶▶ The thought here is that ~ prior to salvation, ~ we were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel.

▷▷ Gentiles could never fully partake of the spiritual privileges promised to Israel, ~ God's chosen people.

▷▷ While Gentiles could become Jews after an extensive training period, ~ followed by circumcision and baptism, ~ the sense of exclusion was never fully removed. ~ Gentiles could never truly be citizens of Israel.

▶▶ But there was a more serious citizenship from which we were excluded. ~ In our spiritually dead condition, ~ we were excluded from citizenship in heaven.

▷▷ And that has some really horrifying implications. ¶¶ 6/9

▷▷ Speaking of the new Jerusalem, ~ in [Rev. 21:27](#), ~ John writes, ~ "But nothing unclean will ever enter it ~ [i.e., ~ nothing evil will be allowed to enter], ~ nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, ~ but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

▷▷ Now, ~ we'll talk more about this later when we get to [verse 19](#), ~ but suffice it to say at this time ~ that the good news is when Jesus saves a person, ~ they become a citizen of heaven.

IN VERSE 12c, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT WE ARE TO CONTINUALLY REMEMBER ~ THAT IN OUR unsaved state, ~ we were "strangers to the covenants of promise."

▶▶ "the covenants of promise" refer to God's promises that He made to Abraham and his descendants, ~ and confirmed at various times to the patriarchs.

▷▷ As unsaved Gentiles, ~ we had no share in these promises made to Abraham, ~ Isaac, ~ and Jacob.

▷▷ God's covenant with Abraham did involve future blessing for all the families of the earth, ~ but the covenant was a promise to Abraham and his descendants.

▶▶ The good news is that when a person is saved by Jesus, ~ that person becomes a child of Abraham, ~ and therefore an heir of "the covenants of promise."

▷▷ In [Gal. 3:7](#), ~ Paul writes, ~ "Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons ~ [i.e., ~ children] ~ of Abraham."

↪↪ Those who put their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are the children of Abraham.

▷▷ And in [Gal. 3:29](#), ~ Paul says, ~ "And if you are Christ's, ~ then you are Abraham's offspring, ~ heirs according to promise."

↪↪ I.e., ~ now that believers belong to Christ, ~ we are the true children of Abraham. ~ That makes us his heirs, ~ and God's promises to Abraham belong to us.

IN VERSE 12d, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT WE ARE TO CONTINUALLY REMEMBER ~ THAT IN our unsaved state, ~ we had "no hope."

▶▶ Earlier, ~ in [Eph. 1:18](#), ~ as we know, ~ Paul prayed that God would give believers an expanded and solid understanding of the hope that came from His calling.

▶▶ Recall that biblical hope has an objective and a subjective meaning. ↵↵ 7/9

▷▷ The objective meaning is that the believer's hope is the totality of what God has promised the Christian at the end of this age ~ and in the life to come.

↳↳ Which includes the promise of Jesus' second coming, ~ God's promise of our resurrection and glorification, ~ **the inheritance that we obtained through Jesus, ~ and God's promise of a new universe.**

→→ And every part of this hope that we have is, ~ we noted, ~ 100%, ~ absolutely guaranteed to be fulfilled.

▷▷ The subjective meaning of the believer's hope is that it is an attitude of expectancy, ~ which is actually a result of the reality of the hope that came from God's calling.

↳↳ The certainty of God's promises to believers for the future produces within us a confident expectation ~ of the fulfillment of all that God has promised.

▶▶ And here in **2:12d**, ~ Paul says we had none of this prior to salvation. ~ We had no promise of a glorious future ~ and therefore no confident expectation of a glorious future.

▷▷ For the believer, ~ life leads to a greater, ~ awesome life.

↳↳ When we were unsaved, ~ life was leading to despair, ~ discouragement, ~ depression, ~ uncertainty for the future, ~ a fear of death, ~ and death itself.

→→ What a horrible condition we were in. ~ What a horrible condition those who are still separated from Christ are in.

FINALLY, ~ IN VERSE 12e, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT WE ARE TO CONTINUALLY REMEMBER ~ that in our unsaved state, ~ we were "without God in the world."

▶▶ Paul does not mean that we were necessarily atheists. ~ The word translated as "**without God**" refers to not having a relationship with the one true God.

▷▷ We were living in this world without a relationship with the one true God.

▷▷ Think through some of the things that meant. ~ we did not have Him guiding us, ~ blessing us, ~ or helping us. ~ We did not have His friendship. ~ 77

↳↳ We did not have Him to turn to in times of trouble. ~ We did not have His word steering us through this sin-darkened world.

→→ How tragic. ~ And how tragic for those who still do not have a relationship with the one true God. 8/9

▷▷ The phrase "in the world" reminds us of our former condition described in 2:1-3.

↳↳ When we were unsaved, ~ we went along with and practiced the standards of this world, ~ and we followed and aligned ourselves with Satan.

CONCLUSION.

CONTINUE TO REMEMBER THE WAY YOU WERE, ~ PAUL SAYS.

▶▶ Not to make us feel guilty or to drag us down, ~ but in order for us ~ to come to a greater appreciation for the great things God has done for us ~ and for how He has had mercy on us.

▶▶ And remembering the way we were ~ will help prevent us from failing to appreciate God, ~ will help prevent us from failing to obey Him, ~ and will help prevent us from failing to keep ourselves pure.

▶▶ And it will also, ~ on the other hand, ~ help guard us against spiritual pride.

LET'S PRAY 9/9