

Brought Near by the Blood of Christ – *Ephesians 2:11-13*

Introduction – Previously (vv1-10), we saw the depth of our sinfulness and the heights of our salvation-life in Christ. We saw the love of Christ demonstrated vertically. But God would have us see as well a horizontal demonstration. Once, we were far, far from God, but we have been brought near by the blood of Christ. The first was positional; this second is relational. To anyone who desires to be near to God, this passage points to the only Way.

Gentiles in the Flesh (v11) – There had always been a great gulf between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews were proud of the distinctive of circumcision, a God-ordained covenantal sign that went back to Abraham (Gen 17:9-14) which marked them as God's special covenant people (Amos 3:2a). For centuries, the "circumcision" had looked down on the "uncircumcision," which was unfaithful to their calling which was to be a blessing to all the nations (Gen 12:3) by pointing them back to the true God. Paul pokes at them, calling them "the Circumcision *made in the flesh by hands*." God was never interested in a people simply being identified by some outward sign if all it did was declare the hypocrisy of the heart (Rom 2:28-29). Paul was the perfect example, having once boasted in his A+ Jewishness, God caused him to realize it was all trash compared to knowing Christ (Phil 3:1-11).

The Gentiles *in the flesh* were no better. Greeks in particular believed their language was the language of the gods, that all non-Greeks were barbarians (Rom 1:14) and the Ephesians were particularly proud of their worship of Diana (the goddess of fertility, a huge temple for her rested in Ephesus – Acts 19). Gentile Christians were probably the majority in the Ephesian church. Nevertheless, the Gentile Christians were, in particular to "*Therefore, remember*" from where they had come.

Five Times Separated – All Gentile nations, before Christ, had no direct access to Yahweh. They were far, far away. Paul notes five distinct but not unconnected separations. First they were "*without Christ*," the Messiah. Gentiles had no hope of a deliverer and therefore no destiny other than final judgment of God of which they were unaware. Second, they were "*aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*" and it should be noted that they were aliens by choice. They had no God-blessed community or kingdom and no blessed dominion mandate or divine benefactor. Third, they were "*strangers to the covenants of promise*." God had made specific covenants with Israel (with Abraham, Moses, and David, renewed with Isaac and Jacob, Joshua, Solomon, and Ezra/Nehemiah) where He had promised to be their God and they His people. Outside of those covenants, there was no possibility of being near God. Fourth, they had "*no hope*" for their people, for eternal life after death, or for any eternal destiny (1 Thess 4:13) – and historians tell us that a great cloud of hopelessness covered the ancient world. Finally, they were "*without God in the world*." The Gentiles had gods aplenty, as Paul witnessed in Athens (Acts 17), but no matter how religious or moral he might try to be, the Gentile did not have God as his God – again, because he did not want to. Elsewhere, Scripture makes clear that all men know God, but refuse to acknowledge Him and refuse to give Him thanks (Rom 1:18-23). It is from that refusal that so much idolatry and wicked practices come forth; we become like the demons we worship.

Brought Near – "*But now...*" everything changed with the coming of Jesus. He was what circumcision pointed to and promised, what the Temple and Jerusalem and the whole story of Israel pointed to and promised. He was what the covenants of promise declared for all the nations. The covenant blessings made with Abraham were going to flow "*to all the nations of the earth*" (Gen 26:4) and so all the peoples were to praise Him (Psalm 67). The promise was to Abraham and to his descendants, that is, those who had the faith of Abraham (Gal 3:26-29). It is no longer Jew or Gentile. It is the new Man, Jesus; it is being in Christ – and only being in Christ that brings us near to God.

By the Blood of Christ – The blood of Christ is the cleansing power of our Savior Who took the penalty for our sin upon the cross. It is the glorious truth of our forgiveness. But it is more than that. To be brought near by the blood of Christ means that His blood is our blood too. "We are not merely the beneficiaries of the blood of His death; we are recipients of the blood of His life" – Chapell. We are brought near to God by the body and blood of His Son which feeds and sustains us in our new life (John 6:51-59). Our life, our identity, our heritage, our personhood, is all from Him and in Him. This is the blessing of union and communion with God through Jesus Christ.

If Near, Then – Consider the five separations in light of our union and communion, our nearness, to God. We do have a Messiah, the promised Deliverer to His people, and the world will be saved (John 3:16-17). We are part of the commonwealth of the covenant people of God, a people under Christ who can and will serve His kingdom and dominion. We are now partakers of the covenants of promise; in fact we are the manifest witness that those covenants extend to all peoples. We are a people of hope for we know we live under the sovereign care of a perfect and all-powerful God whose love covers us always. And we are with God in the world. Jesus Christ, His blood sacrifice and His life-blood, is the only way to be near the Father. If you are in Christ, then you are near – and you may draw near in full assurance.