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# **Don't Forget What Has Happened**

## **Ephesians 2:11-22**

### **Introduction**

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1. Have you ever in a conversation had someone say to you, "Remember when . . ." in an effort to call to your mind a past event.
2. Perhaps you have said, "No, I don't remember that," to which the other person may have responded, "Oh sure you do. It was the time when this or that happened."
3. You may then have responded, "Oh, yes, I do remember that."
4. God often calls upon His people to remember various things:
  - a. "Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt . . ." (Exodus 13:13).
  - b. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).
  - c. "Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me" (Isaiah 46:9).
  - d. "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19).

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5. Our text tonight begins with Paul calling upon the Christians in Ephesus to remember where they had come from in order that they might appreciate more fully the many spiritual blessings they now enjoyed in Christ.

"Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands—" (Ephesians 2:11, NASB95)
6. What was it about their previous lives that Paul wanted them remember.

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## **I. Remember Where You Came From**

### **A. YOU WERE SEPARATE FROM CHRIST**

“Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ” (*Ephesians 2:12a, NASB95*)

1. Circumcision had been given by God to Abraham (*Genesis 17*) as the physical sign of their covenant with the Lord.
2. It pointed to the exclusive relationship which Israel had with God.
3. The uncircumcision of the Gentiles was evidence of their estrangement from God.
4. They were not part of the Messianic people.
5. They had no thought or hope of a Messiah.
6. Because you and I would be considered Gentiles, the same is true of us.

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### **B. YOU WERE EXCLUDED**

“Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel . . .” (*Ephesians 2:12, NASB95*)

1. The Law of Moses became a kind of invisible barrier, separating Jews and Gentiles.
2. The Jews had little love for the Gentiles because of their ignorance of and disregard for the Law.
3. The Temple of the first century had a literal wall which separated all Jews from the Gentiles.
4. Signs were posted all along the wall in both Latin and Greek which read:
 

*“Let no one of any other nation come within the fence and barrier around the Holy Place. Whosoever will be taken doing so will himself be responsible for the fact that his death will ensue.”*
5. Thus they were isolated from any covenant relationship with God.

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### **C. YOU WERE STRANGERS**

“Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise . . .” (*Ephesians 2:12, NASB95*)

1. God had bound Himself unconditionally to bring blessing upon and through Israel (*Genesis 12:2ff.; 13:14ff.; 15:1ff.; 17:1.; 22:15ff.*)

“And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing;” (*Genesis 12:2, NASB95*)

2. The Gentiles had no such promise.

**Slide 6****D. YOU WERE WITHOUT HOPE**

“Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope . . .” (*Ephesians 2:12, NASB95*)

1. They did not share the hope which the coming of the Messiah was to bring.
2. Neither could they hope in the resurrection of the dead (*1 Thessalonians 4:13*).

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.” (*1 Thessalonians 4:13, NASB95*)

3. Only the presence of Christ in their lives could produce that hope (*Colossians 1:27*).

“to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (*Colossians 1:27, NASB95*)

4. In 500 B.C. a Greek named Theognes wrote the following:

*“I will try to have a good time while I’m young, because I will lie under the earth for a long time — voiceless as a stone, and I shall leave the sunlight that I loved . . . then I shall see no more.*

*Have a good time, my soul, while young; soon others will take my place, and I shall be black earth in death.*

*No mortal is happy under the sun.”*

5. Those who are apart from Christ typically wrap their lives around things and refuse to think about ultimate reality.

**Slide 7****E. YOU WERE WITHOUT GOD**

1. They had no relationship with the true God.
2. Like so many other Gentiles they had a pantheon of deities to which they were devoted (cf. *1 Corinthians 8:5,6; Galatians 4:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:5*).

“So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. “For while I was passing

through and examining the objects of your worship . . ." (Acts 17:22–23a, NASB95)

3. Today's world is no different — but the false gods are nothing, and the religious ceremonies are nothing without the one true God.

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## II. A Dramatic Reversal Has Occurred

### A. WE HAVE BEEN BROUGHT NEAR TO GOD

"But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13, NASB95)

1. This has been made possible through Jesus Christ.
2. We have been "brought near" to Him through the sacrificial death of Christ.
3. We become members of a new community in which we stand on equal footing with the Jews.
4. We now have access to God Himself.

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### B. CHRIST IS OUR PEACE

"For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall," (Ephesians 2:14, NASB95)

1. "Peace" is the theme of verses 14-18 — Paul utilizes it four times (vv. 14, 15, 17[twice]).
2. Typically we think of peace as the absence of war.
3. Peace is not just the absence of hostility — to Paul, peace meant so much more.
  - a. In both O.T. and N.T. it indicates well-being in its widest sense.
  - b. Includes salvation, whose source and giver is God alone.
  - c. It means wholeness, completeness, well-being, prosperity
4. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be called "the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

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### C. HOW DID CHRIST BRING PEACE?

"For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down

the barrier of the dividing wall," (*Ephesians 2:14*, NASB95)

1. He *broke down the barrier of the dividing wall*.
  - a. The literal barrier in the temple which prohibited Gentiles from entering the inner courts where Israel worshiped.
  - b. The real barrier was, in fact, the Mosaic law itself with its detailed holiness code .
  - c. It separated Jews from Gentiles both religiously and sociologically, and caused deep-seated hostility.
  - d. The enmity which was caused by the Jews separateness was often accompanied by a sense of superiority on their part.

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2. He abolished the law.

"by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances" (v. 15a)

- a. Christ has abolished this hostility by his death.
- b. He has done away with what separated the Jew from the Gentile — "the law of commandments consisting in ordinances."
- c. "Abolish" — to 'make ineffective, or powerless, nullify'.
- d. Christ by his sinless life and death on the cross made the law of no effect.
- e. Because He fulfilled the moral law, taking away its condemnation, all have free access through grace (cf. **2 Corinthians 3:6-15**)

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2. He *created a new humanity*.

". . . so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace" (v. 15b)

- a. What Jesus did was to create a new man, a new humanity, a new race.
- b. Christ didn't change Gentile into Jew, nor vice versa.
- c. No longer is there Jew or Gentile — all are one in Christ (cf. *Galatians 3:28*).

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (*Galatians 3:28*)

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3. He *reconciled the new humanity to God*.

“and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity” (v. 16)

- a. Through His death on the cross, our Lord brought the two groups together as one in the church — He healed the horizontal relationship.
- b. He also put to death that which separates us from God thus restoring our vertical relationship.

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### D. THE RESULT

“And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father” (Ephesians 2:17-18, NASB95).

1. We both have peace with God.
2. We both have access to our Father through the same Spirit.

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## III. Our New Position

### A. WE HAVE A PLACE IN GOD'S HOUSEHOLD

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,” (Ephesians 2:19, NASB95)

1. We now have a privileged place in God's 'household'.
2. “Alien” describes a person who lives in a place that is not his home.”
3. Formerly, we were outsiders.
4. Christ has changed all that.
5. Now we belong in a way we never did before.
6. We are now fellow citizens with the saints (cf. Philippians 3:20).
7. In the Roman world of Paul's day to be a 'member of a household' meant ...
  - a. refuge and protection
  - b. identity
  - c. a sense of belonging

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### B. WE HAVE A PRIVILEGED POSITION IN HIS TEMPLE

“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus

Himself being the corner stone," (*Ephesians 2:20, NASB95*)

1. We have a privileged position in His building and temple, the place where he dwells.
2. Christ is the foundation — the chief cornerstone — upon which everything else rests.

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**C. WE ARE STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

"in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord," (*Ephesians 2:21, NASB95*)

1. We are growing and progressing to an ultimate goal of holiness.
2. God already dwells within us even though we are still growing.

**Conclusion**

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"in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." (*Ephesians 2:22, NASB95*)

1. What a magnificent change has occurred in our lives.
2. Whereas we were once separated from Christ, excluded from the covenant community, without God and without hope, we now are being built into the dwelling place of God Himself.
3. Whereas we once indulged the desires of our sinful nature, we now seek to fulfill the desires of the Holy Spirit.
4. Are you a part of God's temple, God's building?
5. If not, you can be.