

Far Away Brought Near Ephesians 2:11-13

Introduction

NJFK—tickets; no one gets in without a ticket; how does one get a ticket back to God— heavenly kingdom, paradise, Eden restored, and how much does it cost?

11 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— **12** remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Remember that at one time (11)
Remember that you were at that time (12)
But now (13)

Once far off
Brought near
Far Away Brought Near

To whom is Paul talking? You Gentiles in the flesh—natural, physical ethnicity
Past: Far away from what/whom?
Present: Brought near to what/whom?

Great divide in the human race—Jews and Gentiles (ethnicities), those circumcised and those not

Circumcision—sign of the covenant between Abraham and God (commanded!); Jews practicing Jewish customs vs Gentiles—the uncircumcision—who did not

Circumcision a sign of separation from the sins of the flesh and of consecration to God. Affirmed that one's very existence was due to the intervening work of God, that one's private life is God's business, that one's marriage is sacred, and one's body belongs to the Lord, not to the immoral norms of the surrounding pagan cultures.

"Make in the flesh by hands"—external distinction— did not make a person more acceptable to God

Romans 2:28-29: For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Many such distinctions still divide people—outward ceremonial distinctions

No outward liturgy, ceremony, or garment will bring a person into acceptable fellowship with God any more than circumcision in and of itself could—a false basis for pride

Verse 12 explains that the real issue is not circumcision or uncircumcision, but relationship

Separated from Christ (the Messiah)—every covenant pointed to Him; the point of the law and the prophets; the law of God not an end in itself—was intended to lead us to Christ; with a very few exceptions, the Gentiles were ignorant of the hope of the Messiah

Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel Commonwealth—word we get polity and politics from—the right of citizenship or community

In Israel's case, not just political privilege, but spiritual

Theocracy combining spiritual, political, social, cultural elements

“Alienated” recalls man's fall from his original privilege of walking with God in the days of Eden

Others nations—art, literature, law, military science—ancient wonders of the world

But who could reverse the fall of man—who could offer redemption from sin—who could restore communion with God?

The name Israel—"prince with God" reminds us of the initiative of God in making a people for himself

Life of Jacob, the supplanter, a chronicle of God's interventions

Spiritual privilege of being the people of God, chosen out of all other nations for this relationship—prescribed worship—the true God versus the gods of the nations

Strangers (foreigners) to the covenants of promise

Covenant—commitment of God

Promise—truth yet to be experienced

Pointed to the coming Savior King

God's interventions—making Himself known, binding himself by contract to a people

Covenant Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—the one in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed; descendant of Judah

Moses—law—a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ

Sacrificial system—necessity of a mediator between God and man; innocent life given for guilty ones

David and Solomon—the eternal kingdom

Prophet Isaiah—the messianic age—desert blossom like a rose; substitutionary sacrifice—wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities

The one in whom the Gentiles would trust

Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel—the new covenant, God’s law in their hearts

Promises all center on Christ as Savior—without Christ even Israel has no hope

Without hope

Not that they cherished no hope—all people have hopes and dreams—really glorified wishes

But they have no good reason, no solid ground for hope

Some rely on morality, religion, universal salvation, even justice (most popular—good works outweigh bad—try that in a court of law)—all unfounded hopes—“delusive and vain”

Without God in the world

Transliteration—*atheists*, not in the sense of not believing in the existence of God, nor of

opposing God, but of being cut off from God and from his help—no relationship to Him

Ryle, *Walking with God*, 33: “They eat and drink, sleep and wake, live on God’s earth and enjoy his mercies. They have bodies which must die, and they have the Day of Judgment and eternity ahead of them. Yet for all this they never speak to God. They live as though they were animals rather than men with never dying souls.”

Psalmist: The Lord is my shepherd.

Paul: The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.

Hebrews (quoting Psalm 118 et al): The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?

“In the world”—enmeshed in the region outside the commonwealth

“Dark, hostile, and under Satan’s dominion”—
“Far off”

The world is under God’s wrath, passing away, to be destroyed with fervent heat
We could not draw near to God without being destroyed—that’s why we run from Him and rebel against Him.

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

But now—something has happened to reverse all this—brought near—how?

In Christ Jesus—The Messiah, the God-man named Yahweh saves—saves his people from their sins

Not what you do or even what you are—whether you have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ—no man comes to the Father but through Him

By the blood of Christ.
Not by His teaching, His example

What has alienated us from God is our sin—unless there is a remedy for that we remain helpless and hopeless, condemned forever
By His blood— There must be propitiation—satisfaction of the wrath of God on sin.
Otherwise no communion with God (sacrificial system—tent of meeting)
Innocent life for a guilty life deserving of death because of sin and rebellion against the God of life
Forgiveness—w/o shedding blood, impossible
Atonement—covering, bearing away our sin
Redemption—ransom paid to free us
Cleansing from all unrighteousness
Result: Reconciliation—relationship restored