

Biblical Wokeness, Part 1

The Doctrine of the Church

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Well, as we come back to our second installment in "The Doctrine of the Church," we come to Ephesians 2 and over the next several weeks together we're going to be considering verses 11 down to verse 22, so we're going to take this in multiple parts. So we're going to have a little miniseries inside of a series, okay? A little miniseries inside of a series on the church which I have entitled "Biblical Wokeness." Biblical wokeness and tonight is part 1.

Now I really deliberated for some time today as to whether I was going to use this title or not because obviously it invokes some thoughts and some reactions and some disagreements or angers or, you know, objections that really if I had entitled it anything else might not be there, but I went and I looked, I went and I looked up the definition of wokeness because I wanted to make sure that I was thinking correctly and not misrepresenting the term. So I went to Merriam-Webster and I looked. There will be some that in this area of wokeness would accuse me of going to the wrong source to find a definition for wokeness because they would see Merriam-Webster as being part of the paradigm or the system of oppression that wokeness is describing, that really Merriam-Webster wouldn't understand what wokeness was so how do you get a definition from somebody who doesn't know what the term means? So I went and I looked and I listened to some videos, and I read some people who were supposed to be the experts in wokeness, and I found out that they agreed with Merriam-Webster or Merriam-Webster agrees with them. So right there, that tells me that this paradigm of certain ethnicities having no idea what wokeness means is a falsehood from the beginning, okay?

But here's what Merriam-Webster said about wokeness. It said "woke" became a watchword in parts of the black community for those who were self-aware, now notice self-aware, questioning the dominant paradigm and striving for something better. In Merriam-Webster's extended definition of wokeness, they made reference to an artist, a music artist that I had never heard of before, have no idea who they are, but apparently in 2008 wrote a rap song about being "woke," and that "woke" as a word really came into usage within the black community in and around 2008. But Merriam-Webster goes on to say, you know, they are self-aware, questioning the dominant paradigm and striving for something better but "woke" became part of the wider discussion in 2014 immediately following the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. The word "woke"

became intertwined with Black Lives Matter instead of just being a word that signaled awareness of injustice or racial tension and became a word of action.

Now what they're driving at is when they say self-aware or questioning the dominant paradigm, "woke" is a term that means some people, according to people who subscribe to wokeness, some people see the world for what it really is and some people are blinded to the reality of the way the world is, and this is how they would couch it, that people of color understand what it means to be discriminated against, they understand what it means to have prejudicial decisions made against them, and they would go further to say that the entire structure of America is designed to be prejudicial against people of color. That's why they say that America has systemic racism and that America is a systemic racist place because they see everything as being rigged against them, people of all color.

Now the interesting thing is that statistics don't bear this out, that there is governmental statistics, there is even statistics done by people in the liberal media that they did the studies, found out the statistics didn't support their theory, they tried to bury the statistics but the statistics came out, and so you've got even liberal media and liberal authors finding statistics that don't support their narrative, okay? And so this whole deal with wokeness is just one big shell game trying to find what the root cause of our nation's problems are. Some will say it's this, some will say it's that, some will say it's ethnicity or race problems, some people will say educational problems, some people say it's crime problems, some people say it's political problems. There's all kinds of theories as to why we have the problems within our nation that we have except that there is one that is strangely silent in public discourse and that is the Bible's explanation as to why we have the problems that we have in our nation.

So tonight as we look at the first three verses in Ephesians 2, well, not the first three but we're going to start at 11, the first set of verses that we are going to consider as we are going through this Ephesians passage, we're going to do so under the heading of "Biblical Wokeness, Part 1." Okay? Yes, question?

["How old is that word?"]

Woke? Well, in terms of how it's used now?

["Did they just make it up?"]

Somewhere around 2008. Somewhere around 2008.

[unintelligible]

Written?

[unintelligible]

Well, Merriam-Webster constantly updates their dictionary. The original Merriam-Webster was written in 1828. Well, it wasn't Miriam, it was Noah then.

[unintelligible]

Well, originally, originally and you say that but originally that's how the term was used even in the days immediately following 2008 with the song because that was the idea of the song. I read the lyrics of the song and it was like, "You need to wake up." It seemed to be the idea that people were asleep and that they came into a knowledge of something, they woke up to a particular idea. So I think there's some sense in which that was the usage originally and I think even to a certain extent, that underlies a lot of the usage of this word even today, that you need to pay attention to what's actually going on around you, which is not a sociological or a cultural idea, it's actually a biblical idea as we'll see in our text tonight.

Ephesians 2. I bet you all were wondering where I was going to go with all this but I had to lay the groundwork for the rest of it to really make any sense. Ephesians 2. We're going to be looking at verses 11, 12 and 13 tonight. I'm going to read the entire passage down to 22, understanding we're only going to look at the first three verses. The Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, chapter 2, verse 11.

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

The most beautiful "but" in all of Scripture, verse 13,

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 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, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

All right? So biblical wokeness, part 1.

Father, we thank you for the day that you've given to us and we continue to praise you for your goodness to us and your grace and your mercy and, Father, more now than ever we ask that you would give us eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts that are ready to receive all that you have for us and that, Father, we might understand and see plainly the reality that sets before every human being, that we all need the reconciling love of Christ to unify us unto yourself. So Father, we ask that you would not only move upon us in this way during our time tonight but, Lord, you would plant the seeds all around the world of reconciliation between persons through the blood of Jesus Christ as we are being brought into reconciliation not only with one another but with you. Father, help us to see this. Help us to understand and help us to share it with the world around us. We love you, Father. We praise you and we thank you and we ask these things always in your name. Amen.

So the doctrine of the church, that is, God's called people. You know, we've established that in our first time together, that the church, the ekklesia, the called out ones are God's called people, okay? So that's what the churches, all right? So the doctrine of the church which is God's called people places all people under the same basic problem and in need of the same basic remedy, reconciliation before a holy God. As we'll see in a minute, the Bible doesn't really ascribe the problem to being ethnicity, the problem is not really religion or, you know, what you might believe, your dogmas that you might believe, the problem is sin and that sin has separated all people from a holy God and the only thing that is sufficient to correct the problem is the blood of Christ as he makes peace between not only us and God but that as he makes peace between us and God, he makes peace between us and other people. You know, it goes back to the two greatest laws: love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your might, love your neighbor as yourself. As you are loving God, you will begin to love others. If you are hating others, I would argue it's because you hate God. And I will just say this right up front, I think a lot of this whole sociological woke movement including people within what we would call evangelical life who are proposing it are really outside the gospel. And I hate to say that because there are some very remarkable men supporting this whole woke movement that at one time I considered them to be very sharp theologians but they have gone off the rails. And you can't hate others, you can't love God while you're hating others, and you can't hate others and say that you love God. It just doesn't work. That's contrary to the Scriptures.

So what we're going to focus on tonight in the doctrine of the church is the fact that the church recognizes that all people everywhere have the same problem and it doesn't matter where you come from, your ethnicity, your tribe, your race, your religion, your creed, your socioeconomical status, what you hold in your dogmatic life, we all have the same problem, it's sin. We all have been alienated to a holy God and we all need to be reconciled to a holy God through the blood of Jesus Christ, okay? So the church is preeminently concerned with this central foundational teaching, or we might even say foundational doctrine, it's the doctrine of hamartiology or sin, and so it is core to the understanding of the Scriptures and it's core to inclusion in the church, okay?

So here's the first thing tonight. The Scriptures do not hold the earthly differences in people as being the root problem. The Bible does not hold earthly differences between people as being the root problem. In verse 11, we find this, Paul saying this, "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." So Paul is saying, he's highlighting several different things. The first one is this, that one's ethnicity is not a mark of distinction, all people are born lost. He twice in three verses, in verse 11 and verse 12, Paul says "remember," and it's an imperative, it's a command. It's not a polite suggestion. It is you will remember, you must remember, this is something you've got to remember, okay?

So he's pointing out here at the beginning where he says remember, remember at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, he's highlighting their ethnicity, that they were Gentiles. Now look, for Paul and for the Bible, especially the New Testament, there are only two kinds of people, there are Jews and Gentiles, and that's a metaphor or an analogy, I guess would be a better thing to call it, of lost and saved. Now we know that not all Jews were saved and we know that not all Gentiles were lost, all right? We know that according to the writer of Hebrews, that there were many Jews even in the Exodus who were lost because they never entered the rest. We know that by the testimony of the New Testament that there were many Gentiles who came to faith, all right? But this idea of Jew and Gentile sets up the basis or an illustration that is found within the Bible Old Testament and New Testament in that there are only two classes of spiritual people, lost and saved. So there are lost Jews, there are lost Gentiles. There are saved Jews, there are saved Gentiles, right?

So the point is that ethnicity is not a mark of distinction. The Bible doesn't say that this ethnicity is better and that ethnicity is worse, or this ethnicity, and you notice I'm saying ethnicity because there's only one race, there is only the human race. This ethnicity, the Bible doesn't say that this ethnicity is always lost and this one is always saved. Nowhere in the Scriptures Old or New Testament do you ever find the Bible holding ethnicity as a mark of distinction. The Bible affirms that there are lost and saved in every ethnicity, that's why we have people from every tribe, every tongue, every language, every kindred, every family being represented in heaven as saved because God said, "I will save people from every tribe, every tongue, every kindred, every family, every language." But that doesn't mean he's saving everybody out of that tribe and family and kindred and language, so there's lost and saved in every ethnicity. Ethnicity is not the mark of distinction.

Now we know that there are all lot of people in our world today that are making a lot of hay over different ethnicities and they've gone one step further, I heard one author today describe it as the new Trinity, ethnicity, gender and what was the third one? I've listened to it for about....? No, it's not sexual identity. It's ethnicity, gender and something else. Oh well, forgive me. It's the very basis of where intersectionality and critical race theory has come from, and it may be sexual identity. I don't remember. It may very well be.

The Bible doesn't even recognize those. The Bible doesn't recognize gender as being a mark of distinction or sexual identity as being a mark of distinction. Now we have to be careful with sexual identity because with aberrant forms of sex that go outside of covenant marriage, the Bible is clear that those are indications of lostness, okay? So we have to be a little careful of that one. But there are a lot of people in the world today that are making a lot of distinctions and saying this group is better, this ethnicity is better, and intersectionality, if you can check off more of the oppressed boxes like your gender, you're oppressed because of your gender, you're oppressed because of your ethnicity, you're oppressed because of, you know, your social status or whatever, you know, they are making distinctions between people that the Bible just doesn't make and that's the point. The Bible doesn't make these distinctions. Now the Bible knows that there are men and women, and the Bible knows that there are black and white, and the Bible knows there is free and slave and all that, but those are not distinctions that the Bible holds up as being someone who is okay and someone who is not. The Bible holds up the distinction of lost and saved as the differential between those who are okay and that they are reconciled to God or they're not because they're still in their sin. Ethnicity is not one of the distinctions.

In Romans 3:10 through 19, we find the Apostle Paul writing to the church at Rome who says, now remember one's ethnicity is not a mark of distinction. All people are born lost, right? That's where we're at. All people are born lost. Paul says in Romans 3, "None is righteous, no, not one." Righteousness is the thing that is necessary to be reconciled to God. We have to be seen and declared righteous. Forensic justification, that's a whole other doctrine, but Paul says no one is righteous, no, not one; "no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God."

So what is Paul saying here in Romans 3? He's saying what we've already asserted, that all people are born lost. And if you took that list and we don't have time to do it tonight, but if you took this list that we just read in Romans 3:10 to 19 and you began to gauge what you see in our current culture, you know, when you begin to see the stories of the riots, you know, the rioters, compare what the rioters are doing to this list and see that there is no fear of God there, there is no goodness, there is no righteousness. You listen to politicians, use this list to gauge what they're saying. You know, we hear a lot of abominable things coming out of the mouths of our leaders. And you could use this in every area of life and you would find that most of the folks that are on this crusade for equity are not in alignment with God's word. They just aren't. They are seeking their own agendas and they are making distinctions and pitting people, dividing people one against another, against marks that the Scriptures just simply don't make distinctions on, right?

Well, if that wasn't bad enough, we also need to talk about one's religious affiliation or what you might say, one's dogma. Look, R. C. Sproul, Sr. said everyone is a theologian, everybody has a theology. Not all theologies are equal and not all theologies are good, but everybody's got a theology. Everybody has a dogma and a set of doctrines that they ascribe to, all right? So let me put it to you another way, everybody is religious. Now when we say that, you know, especially as we look at people like J. C. Ryle, what Ryle meant when he said religion is he meant Christian religion. So we tend to think, okay, if I say everybody is religious, then what I'm saying is everybody is Christian. That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that everybody believes in something, all right? And one's religious affiliation or the doctrine that one subscribes to is not a mark of distinction that the Scriptures hold either. The religious are still lost too. So the lost are lost and the religious are lost, okay, unless we are found in Christ and that would be the only exception that we make.

Listen to what Paul says again at the back half of verse 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." Well what is Paul saying? Paul is saying that the Gentiles were called uncircumcised by the Jews who put a lot of hope and trust in their circumcision, and what that circumcision meant was that it was an inclusion for the Jews, circumcision was an inclusion into the covenant community of Israel. That's what that meant and so they believed that they were in right standing with God because they were circumcised.

Now there's a little bit of a back story here that I need to just mention so that you'll understand what's happening. In the Lord Jesus' day and time and in the Apostle Paul's day and time, it was what is known as Second Temple Judaism. This is the Judaism that the nation of Israel subscribed to from the days that they returned back to Israel and rebuilt the temple, which wasn't Solomon's Temple, remember that one was destroyed, it was Herod's. Herod added to it so it was Herod's Temple, that was what was standing when Jesus was here, and Herod's Temple and the expansions and everything that was done remained in place until 70 A.D. when the Romans leveled Jerusalem and then leveled the temple, everything except part of the Western Wall which is what they call the Wailing Wall today, okay? And in that period of time, Israel subscribed to what is called Second Temple Judaism and one of the major tenets of Second Temple Judaism was this, you're in right standing with God because you're found in the covenant with God. How are you found in the covenant with God? You're born into the nation of Israel. Well, if you're not in the covenant with God, you're lost. Yes. How can you be in covenant with God? You're born into the nation of Israel. Does that mean that the Gentiles are lost? They would say absolutely, yes. Could Gentiles ever be saved? They would say absolutely not. Why can the Gentiles not be saved? Because they weren't born into the nation of Israel. Right? So being born into the nation of Israel, inclusion into the nation of Israel under Second Temple Judaism was the main thing in which they found right standing, reconciliation, or what we would call salvation with God. They were born into it because they were born into the nation of Israel.

That ought to really start making a lot of sense when Jesus is talking to the scribes and the Pharisees who are doing all these religious rites, doing all the things that the law of Moses said that they needed to do and then more, and the reality was they were neglecting the weightier matters. They were neglecting justice and righteousness and the goodness of God. They were feeding upon widows and orphans and they thought they were okay. Why are they okay? "Because I'm a Jew. I've been circumcised. I'm in the nation of Israel. I'm covered. I've got my golden ticket. What am I worried about? I'm one of God's beloved people. It doesn't matter what I do. It doesn't matter if I obey." It doesn't matter even this other stuff that we've been seeing in Deuteronomy. They believed they were in right standing because they were one of God's beloved people. The Gentiles could never be one of God's beloved people because they weren't born into the nation of Israel. That's why there is so much friction between Jesus and the New Testament writers, why Paul as he is saying things like this, there were two and God tore down the hostility, the dividing wall between the two, the Jews and the Gentiles when Christ died on the cross, and in his death he removed the wall of hostility and he made one new man out of two. The scribes and the Pharisees were ready to stone Paul for saying that because they considered it to be blasphemy. Why? Because they didn't think the Gentiles would ever be saved. They didn't think that Gentiles could ever be saved, they never had a chance to be saved because they're Gentiles. All right, aren't you glad they were wrong? I am.

So they had religion. We are specifically talking about the Jews, the unbelieving Jews of Paul's day had dogma, they had doctrine, they had faith, and they believed in it fervently. I mean, they make some of us look like heathens in terms of their religious affections, to use Edwards' term, right? But they were lost because religion is not a mark of distinction in the Scriptures. The religious lost are still lost. Religion doesn't save. Religion never has. Paul says that the Gentiles who were uncircumcised, they were in many cases pagan, well, everybody is pagan before they come to Christ, but the Gentiles were living a hedonistic lifestyle, all right? They were called uncircumcised by the circumcision party, if you want to call it that, but that circumcision was not a circumcision of the heart, the circumcision that Paul is making reference to here is the actual rite of circumcision which is just circumcision of the flesh. That's all it is. It's just inclusion in a group and that's it. So religion doesn't buy us anything and it's not a mark of distinction that the Scripture recognizes.

Galatians 2:15-16, "We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners," now listen to what Paul just said. This is Paul writing to the church at Galatia. Paul identifies with the Jewish nation and he says, "We are Jews," now did y'all catch that? How? "By birth and not Gentile lost people, sinners," he's saying Gentile sinners. So he's identifying, we are in right standing with God by birth. That's Second Temple Judaism and the Gentiles have no opportunity to participate in this reconciliation with God because they were born Gentiles and not Jews. That's what this very first phrase in verse 15, it's a loaded phrase and that's what it means. Paul is recognizing that but listen to what Paul says in verse 16, "yet," although in contradiction to what I just said, "we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ." So Paul has turned what the Jews believed in terms of their religion from verse 15 and verse 16, Paul has turned that on its

head and he said, "Yes," Paul says, "we are Jews, we're born into it, we're born into the covenant with God, that's our framework, that's our belief, yet in Christ we understand that by works of the law or by this birth into the nation of Israel as a Jewish person, I'm not justified in any way. God doesn't find favor, I don't find favor in God's eyes, God is not impressed with me, God doesn't love me because I was born into the nation of Israel," Paul says, "but that through faith in Jesus Christ. I am in right standing with God not because of religion but because of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Paul goes on to say, "so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified." All right, so do you understand what Paul's saying? The religious identity that we might carry with us, the religious rites that we might have undergone, we might have walked an aisle, signed a card, said a prayer, got baptized, and those things have their place, but you're not saved because you did any of that. The prayer didn't save you and the baptismal font didn't save you. Faith in Christ Jesus which was evidenced in your obedience to undergo those things because Christ said that we ought to be baptized, but your faith in Christ is what saved you. It's the work of Christ in your heart that moved you to do those things, not those things themselves. That's what Paul is saying.

So our religion, one's religious affiliation or more broadly, one's doctrine and dogma that they subscribe to whether it be a religious dogma or whether it be a social justice dogma or whether it be an economic greed dogma, whatever your dogma is, that's not a distinction, that's not a mark of distinction that the Scripture recognizes. You're not saved because you're a social justice warrior. You're not saved because you believe in Christian doctrine. You're saved because God has done a work in your heart. You can be religious and still be lost as evidenced in the Jews, right?

So the Scriptures do not hold the earthly differences of people as being the root problem. So your ethnicity is not the root problem, your dogma is not the root problem, the root problem is your sin which is number 2. The Scriptures, in fact, hold that alienation from God is one's own sin. That's the problem, okay? So in verse 12, go back to Ephesians 2:12, Paul says for a second time remember, "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." All right, now we've all heard this verse before, we've heard this list and so we're just going to break it down and kind of talk about what does it mean and how does it apply to the doctrine of the church.

Well, the first thing I want to mention tonight is that the default position for all people is independent separation from God. Verse 12, "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ." Your version may say "without Christ." The word that's used there just means independent of. That's all it means. This separation just means you're independent, that Christ is over here and you're over here and y'all are not connected in any way. You're completely independent. That's why I said an independent separation.

We need to remember and this is crucial to the doctrine of the church, that all people by default are born into a lost condition. All people are born by default into a lost condition. Now I mentioned last week in several places about guarding membership, that guarding membership is a hill that we need to die on. Well, how do we do that? We do that by simply asking people to write out their testimony. If they're looking to join Grace Covenant Baptist Church, as part of the membership application that we give to people, we ask them to write their testimony out. At times we've asked people to give or people have wanted to give a verbal testimony of their salvation experience. Why do we do that? Because we want people to think about when they were actually saved and we have found some folks over the years who thought they were saved, that when they began to write their testimony out, they realized they weren't saved. They might have undergone a rite or a ritual but there was nothing saving in that rite or ritual. And if we had never asked them to write out their testimony, we would have just assumed that they said, "Yeah, I'm a Christian," and we took them at their word we would have admitted an unbelieving person into the fellowship of the believing church and that's always problematic when we do that, right?

So it's not that we say people are bad. I've known a lot of very moral, goodhearted, friendly, family oriented, like to be around them kind of people who were lost as a goose, right? I'm sure y'all have too. We are wanting to make sure that in terms of membership, that the people who are uniting here at Grace Covenant Baptist Church are believing people, and if you don't have a testimony as you're writing it out, we've gone a long way to help people establish a testimony. I mean, that's just kind of what we're about. But the default position, that comes from, that idea comes from a basic understanding that all people are born lost until God does a work in their heart, and so we don't assume that anybody is saved until we see the evidences of salvation, the fruit of salvation, the regeneration of the Holy Spirit and the fruit that comes out of that. And as we're looking at people's lives, if we don't see the fruit, we generally ask questions very gently and carefully about, "How do you stand with Christ? Where are you?" Because all people are born into this independent separation from Christ.

John 15:5, Jesus put it this way, he said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do," very few things? No, "you can do nothing." You can do nothing. So let me just unpack this really quick. First of all, Jesus is the root. Jesus, we're connected to Jesus. Jesus is not connected to us. We're the tail and he's the dog, right? That's probably not a good analogy but y'all get the point. He is the cornerstone, not us. If we are actually connected to him and abiding in him, we'll bear fruit. He bears fruit because that's who he is, and if his Spirit is living in us, we'll bear fruit. And if we're not connected with him, not only do we not bear fruit, we're dead. We can't do anything, right? So Jesus just points out to us very quickly in John 15 that if you're outside of Christ, "If you're outside of me," Jesus would say, "you're dead." And that's where you were born. You didn't fall into that, you were born into that. That's where everybody starts, all right?

So B, this separation means that the church is a foreign concept in your thinking, "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the

commonwealth of Israel." Now we don't like that word "alienated," right, or "aliens," because that's too harsh a word, right? We don't have illegal aliens, we have illegal immigrants, all right? No, we have illegal aliens because our culture is foreign to them and they are foreign to our culture. It's an alien concept and it goes something like this, as somebody comes to America who has never been here before, they were raised somewhere else, they've never been here before, they get here, they probably don't speak the language and so road signs and signs on the sides of buildings are gibberish. It doesn't make any sense to them whatsoever. Now that's a hard concept for us to grasp because we grew up here and we read signs and road signs and things on sides of buildings all the time and we go, "Oh yeah," and we've never probably experienced being in a place where we're reading signs on the side of the building and we go, "I haven't got a clue what that says," right?

Now look, I've traveled all over the world, I've traveled all over the world, other than the Far East there's probably not a part of the world that I haven't visited at least once, okay? Now Russia being the exception. I traveled all the way, many thousands of miles, days of travel to New York City and got over in one of the boroughs, it's the ones where it's primarily a Russian community, I think it's maybe Long Island if I remember correctly, and I get over into that part, that borough of New York City, and everything in that part of New York City is written in Russian. The street signs are in Russian. The business names are in Russian. The advertisements for all the handbills and the newspapers and the trash on the street was written in Russian, and for the first time in my life I came to a place where I couldn't read anything that was on any of the buildings, any of the signs, and I felt like an absolute alien, out of place. I didn't know what was going on. Well, that's an idea of aliens, being alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, or alienated from the church.

The separation that we are born into means that this idea of the church is a foreign concept to most people, a foreign concept to people who are lost. They don't understand what the church is. They don't understand what the church is for. They don't understand how you get into the church or what does it mean to be in the church. It's just completely foreign. They're alienated to anything and everything related to the church in terms of their thinking, and so we shouldn't be surprised when lost people don't like the church, don't want to be around the church, reject the church because they don't understand the church, right? And that's part of being lost, that's the condition that all people are born into naturally by default. They're born into a position where they just don't understand what the church is or what it means and they're naturally not attracted to it because it's just weird. Church people are just weird, right? And so alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.

Listen to Ephesians 4:18 through 19. Paul says of the lost that, "They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity." And you go, "Okay, Rusty, what are you driving at?" Well, it is pretty straightforward, they are darkened in their understanding, their understanding as to what the church is, what it

does, how it functions, how you get there, how you stay there, why it's important, they ain't got it. Their understanding is darkened. They don't understand what that is all about.

He goes on to say they are alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that's in them. It's not an ignorance or a misunderstanding of a concept, it's actually a heart condition and the life of God is not in them because of that ignorance due to the hardness of their heart. There is a further spiritual condition there that they are hardhearted, they don't want to know. They don't know and they don't want to know. They're not interested in the things related to the church. They become calloused. They claim, this is a common accusation that the church is just a bunch of hypocrites, "Why would I ever want to go down there?" They are calloused to the things of the church and they've given themselves up to sensuality. Now let's not run to sexuality so quickly, although it might very well be that, but those things that are sensual to them, those things that are attractive to them, those things that they would rather be doing than investing in the life of the church, and they're greedy to practice every kind of impurity. Why? Because the things of the church just don't make sense to them and it's nothing more complicated than that.

So the separation that all people are born into means that the church is a foreign concept in their thinking which leads us to the third thing, because you don't understand the church, God does not extend any divine benefits to you, all right? So let's look at verse 12, Ephesians 2:12 again, "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise." Strangers to the covenants of promise. Well, what in the world does that mean? All right, well, let's take the promises part first. Promises are commitments made by people like God who says, "I will bless you. I will provide for you. I will love you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. If you obey my commands, then I will prosper you." I mean, there are all kinds of promises within the Scriptures that God gives us, all right? Those are the promises.

The covenant promises and I'm starting at the back working forward. That's all I'm doing. Covenant promises. These are not promises for health, wealth and prosperity. These are promises for abundant life and being reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus Christ. That's the covenant promises. That's what it means to be God's covenant people, that we have entered into a reconciled covenant with God through the blood of Jesus Christ in which we may have many other benefits, that is certainly true, but the primary benefit that the covenant offers to those who are God's people is being reconciled with God, being forensically justified and being considered not only a kingdom citizen but an adopted child of God, all right? That's the covenant promises and that's what we're strangers to. If we are outside of Christ, if we are working or operating on a worldly or an earthly view of wokeness instead of a biblical view of wokeness, we fail to see that I have been born into sin and by default I am lost, okay? But if I am lost, if I'm born into sin and separated from Christ, then I'm independent from him and I don't understand who he is, I don't understand what his church is about, and because I'm not part of Christ and I'm not part of his church and I don't know what that's about, God is not going to extend to me the divine benefits of covenantal blessings. Why? Because I'm not in the covenant. I'm not. I'm lost. I'm just flat lost and I'm born in that condition.

So as we look at this, strangers to the covenant promises, we need to understand that God only extends the divine blessings, the divine benefits to those who are in covenant with him and that's not something that I get to decide, that's something that God decides. Now we've got responsibility when God moves upon our heart, not denying that, but God has to move on our heart. And so there's a whole bunch of wokeness going on where we're making distinctions between people, dividing ourselves from people along earthly lines, and we completely are missing the real root problem which is sin and we are seeking comfort in all kinds of other places and we're not allowing the Scriptures to convict and confront us and because we are not allowing the Scriptures to convict us, we are outside of Christ, we are outside of knowledge of the church and God is just not extending his covenant blessings to us, okay?

Romans 9:4, "They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen." Now obviously in the context of Romans 9, Paul is talking about national Israel, okay? Can't deny that but very quickly on the tail end of verse 5, Paul begins to talk about not all of those who were born into Israel are the children of Abraham because it's not about physical birth, it's about spiritual birth. It's not all the children of Abraham are not children who are physically circumcised, physically born into the nation, it's those who are born into the nation by faith, the same faith that Abraham had, all right?

So we're making a little bit of an extension here as they are Israelites, we are applying this, in a sense, to the church and this is why, because to the church belongs adoption. Not the adoption of children in an earthly plane although that may be true, but we are adopted into God's family. We say that every time we have Communion. It's not just that we have forgiveness of sins, that's the body broken, the bread, but that we are brought into fellowship with God not just as kingdom citizens but as children so that we might cry, "Abba, Father," and that we are coheirs with Christ. Christ is our brother, we are his brothers and sisters. How does that happen? Because we were adopted into the family of God. The adoption process goes far beyond forensic justification in that we are declared righteous, that we are also adopted into the family and that idea is not found anywhere except within the church. Nowhere other than the church is adoption found, so that adoption is a covenant benefit or a covenant blessing that God bestows upon the church.

Glory is the next one that we find here in Romans 9, the glory. What glory? Well, in a sense, the glory of the church. But where does the glory of the church come from? Not from the church itself, it comes from her husband who presents her without spot, without wrinkle, being washed with the water of the word. That's what the husband in Ephesians 4 is supposed to be doing for his wife. He is supposed to be treating his wife as Christ treats the church. Gave his life for her. Loves her. Cares for her. Provides for her. Cleanses her. Teachers are. Washes her with the water of the word. Presents her spotless without spot or wrinkle, right? That is the glory of the church which is not really the church as much as it is Christ in the church. And by the way, the glory of Christ is not

found anywhere except in the church. Period. You can't find the glory of Christ anywhere else other than in the church.

The covenants. We've already talked about the covenants and Paul could be mentioning all or some or many of the covenants but I think really Paul has in mind the two, the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, and the fact that the law teaches us that we are in need of Christ. So all the stuff that we're talking about tonight, being lost by default and those kinds of issues, the law shows us that but the law doesn't leave us there as we saw this past Lord's day where, you know, Moses is talking about, you know, you have to obey, if you obey you'll live, right? Y'all remember that from our Deuteronomy passage? But we realize very quickly, "Wait a minute, I can't obey. It's impossible for me to obey at the level that God requires me to obey." So God says, he throws the carrot out in front of us and says, "If you obey, I'll prosper you and bless you and you'll have life." But then you realize, "Wait a minute, I can never get that carrot." The covenant of works shows me that I can never work for my salvation, that I can never attain my salvation through anything that I do but it sets the stage for the covenant of grace in which God comes right in and says, "You're right, I've told you if you will obey, you'll live. I know you can't obey so I'm going to give you the ability to obey through the grace of Jesus Christ through forgiveness of your sins to begin with but then the grace that's necessary by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that you might have the ability to obey," all right?

Now there's probably a lot more involved in covenants that we don't have time for tonight but that's just kind of the basic gist of it here. The giving of the law. Did you know that the giving of the law is a divine benefit? The giving of the law is a divine benefit. How would we know that I'm in sin if the law doesn't tell me this is sin? That's what Paul said, "I didn't even know I was coveting until the law came in and said you shall not covet, and I found out, oh my goodness, I'm coveting everywhere. Everything I'm doing is coveting." And Paul would have never known that if the law had not said don't covet. We would never know, we would never have a knowledge of our sin if the law didn't say this is sin. It's a benefit but, you know, the interesting thing is, I think we find a lot of immorality and unethical behavior in the world, flat out paganism because, remember we started everybody is born lost in their sin, everybody is separated from Christ, Christ is over here, the world, people are born into this condition over here, because Christ is over here and the church is over here and all the benefits of the church are over here including the law, many people who are lost today might have a basic understanding of the law. Most people know it's not right to murder or steal but they don't understand the gravity and the punishment for breaking that law, and much of our society is saying, "Ah, it's okay. Don't worry about it. You're not hurting anybody." You know, Forrest Gump's mama said, "It's okay to tell a little white lie." No, it's not. A lie is a lie. It's breaking the commands, all right? Do y'all remember that, you know, where she said, "Stand up there and hold the ping-pong paddle and get \$25,000 and, you know, one little lie won't matter." Yeah, one little lie does matter, right?

So the law is a benefit, the giving of the law. The worship and the promises. I mean, we can just go right down the line. At every one of these, these promises, these benefits, these blessings are given to the church and they're not given to anybody other than the

church, and so if we desire to be adopted, if we desire to live in and for the glory of God, if we desire to be participants and included in the covenant, if we desire to live within the framework of the law in the way that grace has taught us, if we desire to worship, then we must do so within the context of the church biblically defined because if we're not doing it within the context of the church biblically defined, we're not doing it right and we're not receiving the benefits that God promised.

All right, so the default position is that everybody is born independent of Christ. We call that lost. That separation means the church is a foreign concept. Because it's a foreign concept, God doesn't extend his divine benefits to you, and since God doesn't extend, this is letter D, it says God doesn't extend any benefits to you, you're on your own in the world. In the back half of verse 12, the Apostle Paul says, "having no hope and without God in the world." We've come right back full-circle where we started. You're separated from Christ. You're independent from Christ. Look, you can make your own decisions. You can do your own things but you're on your own. There's no help. There's no comfort. There's no consolation. There's no security. There's no strength. Your only hope, consolation, security, strength, if you are in the world is you. That's it. That's all you've got and don't go crying to God when things turn out badly because you make a bad decision. Maybe God will be gracious, he sends the rain on the just and the unjust, but you can't count on it. Why? Because you're on your own and that's where you want to be. Most lost folks, that's exactly where they want to be. They want to be on their own. They don't want God telling them what to do. They don't want the 10 Commandments restricting their freedoms and their liberties and their fun. They want to do what they want to do and they want to go cry to God when something happens when they weren't expecting it, right? But that's not how it works. If you're lost, you're lost, you're by yourself. Maybe God will be gracious, maybe God will be kind, maybe he'll give you favor. He does it all the time but you can't count on it. "Having no hope and without God in the world," or you might amend the terminology, "having no hope because you're without God in the world."

John 4:21. This is the account of Jesus speaking to the woman at the well, right? We know that story. He went through Samaria and the guy, the disciples went into town to get something to eat. Jesus was tired, he sat down by the well. Midday comes along, the hottest part of the day. A woman comes to the well, she comes to the well at midday because she's not going to go to the well at the cool times of the day when the respectable women go, right? She's ostracized in the community. We find out in the story that she's ostracized in the community because she's had five husbands and the man that she's with now is not her husband, and even in Samaritan culture, that wasn't a good thing, right?

So Jesus enters into a discussion with her and I'm always amazed, a woman in this position in society kind of bows up against Jesus in some areas. She does. Listen, verse 21, "Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.'" Well, why did Jesus say that? Because she said to him in verse 20, "Do you know what? Our fathers say that we worship in this mountain. You Jews say you have to worship in Jerusalem. Who is right, Jesus? Can you tell me that, who is right?" She bowed up on him. She got a little high

and mighty with herself and thought that she knew a little more than what she did. Jesus said, "Well, look, there's coming a time where nobody is going to worship on the mountain and nobody is going to worship in Jerusalem."

And I can see the look on her face, like, "What in the world do you mean?" To which in verse 22 he says, "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews." Now let's be careful there. That's not just automatically a sign that salvation was found in national Israel but I think what Jesus is driving at here is that those who he qualifies in the next verses, those who are seeking God in spirit and truth, right, those who are the spiritual worshipers of God. As a matter of fact, he says that, that God is looking for people to worship him in spirit and truth, all right?

So Jesus' point, what I'm saying here, bringing this illustration to bear, is that she didn't know what she was talking about. Very religious perhaps, understood the traditions of her fathers, but it's interesting that the traditions and the doctrines that were taught by that society which had some aspects of Judaism in it, Jewish belief, because a lot of them were half Jews, but those teachings and those doctrines and those things that they held dear didn't seem to really affect her life in a meaningful way because she had five husbands and the man she was with now was not her husband. So we see her espousing doctrine that really doesn't change anything about her behavior which is kind of where we started because we've got a lot of people today espousing woke doctrine that doesn't really change how they live day in and day out other than they strive with great difficulty to make other people look small to make themselves look big. Instead of allowing their deeds to be seen by all, coming into the light and allowing their deeds to be seen by all that they might glorify their Father who is in heaven, they run from the light, they hide in the darkness and they try to make themselves feel good about themselves or look better in the eyes of others by simply making others look worse than themselves. And that's, in a sense, what she was doing and Jesus says, "No, no, no, no. You don't understand what you're doing. You don't understand what you're worshiping. You don't understand God. Let me tell you about God."

So we goes on for an hour is coming, this is verse 23, "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." Not in outward religious rites or rituals. There are rites, there are rituals, there are traditions, we've got that, but those are not, that might be the methodology, it might be the process we go through but the worship of God is not found in the rites and the rituals. Worship of God is not found in denominations, not found in traditions, it's not found in church affiliation. Worship of God is found in faith in the gospel and believing in the truth of Christ and worshiping Christ, worshiping God in spirit, not outward observance but the true regenerate heart and in truth, that is, following what Christ has said because the teachings of Christ, the words of Christ, the life of Christ is truth, right? "I am the way, the truth and for life," right?

So since God doesn't extend the benefits to the lost, they don't understand this and they're trying to build systems of doctrine and dogma that will do absolutely nothing to save

them, and much of the lost world, and in this case the wokeness that we find, are trying to divide and make distinctions into classes of my group is okay, your group is not, and the reality is neither group is okay because neither group is dealing with the real issue, neither group is concerned with sin. They're dividing upon ethnicity or doctrines or dogmas or sexual orientation or all kinds of different things that are not sin, it's not the sin problem. Do they have sin problems in those things? Sure they do but those dogmas and doctrines and wokeness are not addressing sin and the alienation that comes between man and God because of sin.

So that brings us to number 3, what the Scriptures actually do. We talked about the Scriptures do not hold earthly differences as being the problem, Scriptures do hold that alienation from God through one's sin is the problem, but then the Scriptures declare that the only remedy to the problem is that Christ bring you into reconciliation through his death. Verse 13, Ephesians 2:13, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near."

The word "brought" here is a passive. Now I don't want to go too deeply into it other than to say that you don't bring yourself. The passivity of this word means that someone else brings you, all right? The word is "brought" so we're talking about bringing, moving from one location to another, right? It would be similar to Colossians 1 in which we have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved Son in whom we have received redemption, the forgiveness of sin. There is a transference from one place to another. It's not a geographical place, it's actually an ontological place. We are transferred from the kingdom of darkness, which is what we've been born into, and we have been transferred into the kingdom of his beloved Son.

We have been brought, as Paul says here in Ephesians, been brought near by the blood of Christ. That's the remedy. I don't expect the lost philosophers of the world to be highlighting this. They don't understand it. They're lost. I had hoped that some of our evangelical leadership would catch this and insist upon this, but they seem to be ignoring this too which brings me to the point that I said earlier, I wonder about their lostness because this is not a small, slight, minor thing. This is a major cornerstone of Christian belief, that our problem is sin and that we have to be reconciled by the blood of Christ. It's not a small thing.

So my purpose tonight in hitting these three verses is to establish the main outlook, if you will, of the church. What is the church preeminently concerned about? The salvation of souls through the blood of Jesus Christ. Who has the church applied this doctrine to? All people because we are all born into sin. What does the church insist upon? The church insists upon belief in the gospel, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the transference from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, the new nature of the new man, and the unity that comes out of that among people. That's what the church insists upon. How do we get that? Through the blood of Jesus Christ and only through the blood of Jesus Christ. There is no other way. So we've laid the groundwork again, continuing to lay some of the groundwork for what the church is, the doctrine of the church, and in this case how the doctrine of the church stands in stark contradiction to the doctrine of the

world in terms of wokeness, what the world says the problem is and what the church says the problem is. We are in direct contradiction to the world not to be argumentative but that we might see God move upon souls to save them from their sins, right?

All right, well, I think that's probably enough for one night so questions or thoughts?

[unintelligible]

No, no, I will only answer questions related to things I cover in the conference. Sorry.

[unintelligible]

Well, let's pray.

Father, again we thank you for the day that you have given to us. We continue to praise you for your goodness and your mercy and your grace. We thank you, Father, for the doctrine of the church, for the reconciliation that you give to us through the blood of your Son and, Father, for the declaring of our need to be reconciled to you. And Father, forgive us where we have been distracted by so many things in this world, so many competing voices, so many different philosophies. And Father, help us to always see the main thing and that we would keep the main thing the main thing, and that we would see that our greatest need is to be reconciled to you from our sin through the blood of Christ. And so we just ask, Father, that you would help us to keep our eyes on Christ always, and that as we are being salt and light in the world of this truth, that we would keep our eyes on Christ there as well and that, Father, you would send your Spirit out into the world and that you would save other sons and daughters from their sins. We thank you, Father, for this time tonight and we praise you for the teachings that you've given to us and we ask, Father, that as we leave this place, that we would live to glorify you in the things that we do, that we would honor you, and that you, Father, would be proclaimed in the nations and that you would be glorified in that. We thank you, Father. We praise you. We glorify you. And we ask these things in your name, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit we ask. Amen.

"BIBLICAL WOKENESS, PART 1"
The Doctrine of God's Called People
Ephesians 2:11-13
May 12, 2021

"But now in Christ Jesus..." (Ephesians 2: 13)

The doctrine of the Church, that is God's called people, places all people under the same basic problem and in need of the same basic remedy; reconciliation before a holy God.

... woke became a watchword in parts of the black community for those who were self-aware, questioning the dominant paradigm and striving for something better. But... woke became part of a wider discussion in 2014, immediately following the shooting of Michael Brown and Ferguson, Missouri. The word woke became entwined with the Black Lives Matter movement; instead of just being a word that signaled awareness of injustice or racial tension, it became a word of action.~Miriam Webster

1. The Scriptures do not hold the earthly differences in people as the root problem.
 - a. One's ethnicity is not a mark of distinction; all people are born lost
v 11. **Therefore remember that I one time you Gentiles in the flesh,** - (Romans 3:10-90 team; ESV)

 - b. One's religious affiliation is not a mark of distinction; the religious are still lost = called "**the uncircumcision**" by what is called the **circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands-** (Galatians 2:15-16; ESV)

2. The Scriptures hold that alienation from God by one's own sin is the root problem
 - a. The default position for all people is independent separation from Christ .-v. **12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ.** (John 15:5; ESV)

 - b. This separation means that the Church is a foreign concept in your thinking-**alienated from the commonwealth of Israel** (Ephesians 4:18-19; ESV)

 - c. Because you do not understand the Church, God does not extend any divine benefits to you-**and strangers to the covenants of promise,** (Romans 9:4-5; ESV)

d. Since God does not extend any benefits to you, you are on your own in the world -having no hope and without God in the world. (John 4:21-24; ESV)

3. The Scriptures declare that the ONLY remedy to this problem is that Christ bring you into reconciliation through His death. v. 13 but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. I