



06 Ephesians 2 Part 3 – Alienated from God, but Now Aligned with the Will of God

In an attempt to remind the church at Ephesus of who they now are in Christ, Paul the Apostle reminds them that before salvation they were alienated from God. Now, as adopted sons and daughters, they have been brought close to God. They are no longer alienated, but now aligned with the things of God. As we read the

verses for today, we should think of “gentiles” as those outside of the knowledge of God.

¹¹ Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from 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. (Ephesians 2:11-13, NKJV).

Paul brings this up exploring the prominent position that the Jews have with God as contrasted to the historical separation of the gentiles from God. Additionally, he explains how believers no longer experience that distance, whether they be Jew or gentile. The status of the Jews was unique because even when the Jews were disobedient, God favored and treasured them. When has God ever referred to another people group as His “treasured possession?” He hasn’t. The Jews enjoyed a special status with God, and they still do.

These verses that contrast the circumcised and the uncircumcised are contrasting the Jew with the gentile, and the believer with the unbeliever. How were we “as gentiles?” What does that mean? Remember that Jews were circumcised. The gentiles were not. The Jews had an outward sign that they were in a covenant relationship with God. In making His covenants with the Jews, God said, “*And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.* (Genesis 17:11, NASB).

So, Jews referred to the non-Jews as “uncircumcised” or as “dogs.” It is kind of strange to our ears in 2021 to hear that gentiles were referred to as “dogs.” In Bible times dogs weren’t the loveable household pets that we have today. We consider dogs as members of our family. But in those days, dogs just ran in packs and were wild and dangerous. They were just a step removed from coyotes or wolves. They were governed by their appetites, as were the gentiles.

As a matter of fact, dogs are still governed by their appetites. I like to think that my three little doggies love me and that is why whenever I am at the table they come running to me. They

turn around. They roll over. They try to show off to me just how cute they are and how much they love me. I say to Sandy, “Oh look how much they love me!” She says, “They come running to you because you feed them treats off of the table.” Unfortunately, as much as I hate to admit it, I think Sandy is right. You see, dogs are still governed in large part by their appetites. By observing dogs, the Jews noticed their governance by appetite, and noted that gentiles were also governed by their fleshly appetites. This is why they were categorized as ‘dogs.’ That is how we all were before coming to Christ. We were hopelessly governed by our appetites. The gentiles engaged in all sorts of perverse and twisted behaviors. They didn’t know any better. They sacrificed their children on altars to idols and they engaged in perverse religious cults centered around sex and temple prostitution. They debased humans in every way imaginable. God revealed Himself and His law to the Jews and commanded them to live in a way profoundly different from their gentile neighbors. When they were living in accordance with God’s law, they did so.

Paul talks about this unique position of the Jews in Romans 9:4-5. We read, *“⁴ the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. (NIV).*

There in Romans 9 we see that the Jews have enjoyed certain benefits since God chose to come into a covenant relationship with them. It is important to understand what benefits came in being God’s chosen people. It can help each of us to understand how removed we were from the knowledge of God before we came to Christ, and our new identity in Christ. Additionally, it can help us to understand and receive the benefits that come to us now as adopted sons.

The benefits provided as part of the unique relationship that Jews had with God are listed in that Romans 9 passage that we just read and are shown below as follows:

Adoption – The Jews were adopted, in a sense, as a nation being brought into a status of total sonship with the one true God. That was a unique position in the world.

Glory – God favored Israel by revealing His glory to them. The gentiles never had the privilege of seeing God’s glory revealed before them. Just think of the fact that the Israelites were daily witnesses to the Shekina glory of God in such things as the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

The Covenants – They enjoyed the intimacy of a covenant relationship with God. That means God made unconditional as well as conditional promises to the Nation of Israel. No other people group has ever enjoyed such a relationship.

The Giving of the Law – God dispensed the law to them at Sinai. He entrusted this “stiff-necked” (stubborn) people with being the trustees of the Word of God and being partakers in the revelation of God.

The worship – The Jews were given a divine order of worship directly from heaven. No other people group could claim such a thing.

The promises – This is saying that they were partakers of the promises of God as given in His Word.

The Patriarchs – These were their founding fathers, so to speak, of the Israelite nation. God chose to reveal Himself in a personal way to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Messiah – Lastly, the Messiah, the “Anointed One” (Christos in Greek) came out of this people group. To the astonishment of many, Jesus was a Jewish rabbi.

Think about it for a minute. Almighty God didn’t choose to be born as a Scotsman, an Irishman, a Hungarian, a Chinaman, or any other people group. He chose to be born as a Jew. He was born into a Jewish family. He was circumcised on the 8th day, and he was dedicated in the temple. In Romans 9, Paul is saying that those benefits that were once ONLY available to the Jew, have now been made available to the gentiles through Jesus.

If we read today’s passage in the Message it is a little easier to understand what Paul is saying to his audience in Ephesus.

11-13 But don't take any of this for granted. It was only yesterday that you outsiders to God's ways had no idea of any of this, didn't know the first thing about the way God works, hadn't the faintest idea of Christ. You knew nothing of that rich history of God's covenants and promises in Israel, hadn't a clue about what God was doing in the world at large. Now because of Christ—dying that death, shedding that blood—you who were once out of it altogether are in on everything. (Ephesians 2:11-13, MSG).

Paul says that to remember who we are, we should never forget how lost we were before we knew Christ, and we should always remember the benefits that we received as adopted sons and daughters. He says it was “only yesterday” that we were total outsiders to the ways of God. We didn’t have a clue of what God was doing in the world or how He works in the world. And, we didn’t have the foggiest notion of a Messiah who was coming who would free us from the bondage and penalty of sin.

Also, when we were lost, we had no idea of the promises that had been made to Israel, nor would we have ever been able to comprehend the marvelous promises of God that are available to each of us. Paul then says that due to the marvelous coming of Jesus and the shedding of His blood, WE WHO WERE ONCE OUT OF IT ALTOGETHER, ARE NOW IN ON THE WHOLE THING! Imagine that! We are now in the center of God’s plan. Give Him praise and glory!

Paul gives a laundry list of just how “apart” we were from the law of God and the revelation of God.

Separated – We were separated in the sense that we had a great divide between us and God where we didn’t really understand Him or have the capacity to understand the scriptures. We still only understand what He has revealed to us, but we now have a knowledge and wisdom that we didn’t have before coming to Jesus.

Alienated – We were not part of God’s chosen nation in any way. We were distanced from it. We had nothing in common with Israel. Now we are adopted sons who are “joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17).

Strangers from the Covenant - This phrase means that we were not parties to the contract so to speak. We were uninvolved. We were promised nothing and we promised nothing back. We didn’t even have an idea of what it meant to have a loving intimate relationship with God.

Having no hope – Without a relationship with God, we were left with no hope.

Without God – Lastly, Paul says that we were godless. The Greek word used here is “atheists.” We were without God. We now live in an era of militant atheism. You can almost see the world literally shaking its fist at God, cursing God, and spitting into the air. We were the atheists before we came to know Him.

I have a friend on Facebook who claims to be an atheist who spends inordinate amounts of time making derisive remarks about God, evangelicals, the Church, and spiritual things. Think about how ironic that is. I don’t spend a lot of time focusing on things I don’t believe in. Why doesn’t he just talk about things he believes in and talk about how wonderful they are. Instead, he wastes his time arguing about a God he supposedly doesn’t believe exists. Why does he do this? He does this because God does exist and he is in rebellion against God. It bothers him to hear anybody talk about a God he doesn’t want to believe in.

This “separation” list presented by Paul is a perfect description of much of American society today. People who don’t know God are alienated, separated, and largely without hope. Doesn’t it make you glad you are in communion with God? I would be hopeless without the hope that I have in the Lord. I say fairly often, “I don’t know what I would do without my belief in God.”

THE BIG CHANGE

Early on God did choose to make a covenant with Israel. God made many promises that were unique to Israel. But a promise was made to each of us as well. Turn to Genesis chapter 22.

¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,

*¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”
(Genesis 22:17-18, NIV).*

In the last part of that Abrahamic Covenant the blessing of a relationship was promised to the gentiles. A promise was made that ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH WILL BE BLESSED through the offspring of Abraham. In the fullness of time, all the nations of the world were blessed through the Jewish people. God kept that promise! We were blessed through Jesus the Messiah who was a direct descendent of the patriarch Abraham and of the house of David.

In this passage to the church in Ephesus Paul is reminding the church of exactly who they are NOW in the Kingdom of God. Just like Paul, we each need to remind ourselves of who we are in Christ.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 1:13, NKJV).

We have been brought near! What does that mean? It means that you and I can now experience hope, glory, intimacy, promise, adoption, and the Messiah. He begins by drawing us to Himself. We respond with FAITH becoming aware that Jesus came and in His work on the cross we receive the forgiveness that comes with that. What a marvelous relief this is. No more sex driven cultic practices. No more child sacrifice. No more living by the appetites of our flesh. We have a beautiful opportunity to be led by the very Holy Spirit of God in living a transformed life. This is the “being rescued” that we talked about last Sunday. This is part of our salvation. The separation is now removed and we are in intimacy with God. All of those spiritual blessings described about Israel now belong to us. Sin separated us from God, and by the blood (the life) of Christ we are brought close to Him. We are brought near to God by His life being poured out for each of us. We once were alienated, but now we can be aligned with the will of God!

Let us give Him praise, honor, and glory.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese-Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.

