

# “Brought near by Jesus”: Ephesians 2:11-13

Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity – Nov 15, 2020

Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

## Reading: Eph 2:11-13

“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— remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.* <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

## Introduction

1. “Remember” – μνημονεύω, “to call to mind; be mindful of.”
2. Last week, Craig introduced this section of chapter two, showing its relation to the first section or pericope. The first section (vv.1-10) describes how God restored humanity on the vertical axis (with himself). The second section (vv.11-22) delineates how God restored humanity on the horizontal axis. (Ex: the cross).
3. PRAYER.

## Exposition

**“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—**

- Verse 11 begins Paul’s “contrast schema”: “formerly... now (v.13)”
- **“Uncircumcision”** is the word for “foreskin”, ἀκροβυστία, a revolting term used by Jews of Gentiles.
- **“so called”** – a derisive reference to the “Circumcision”, the Jews.

- **“by human hands”** – familiar term used with reference to making idols in OT (Lev 26:1, 30; Isa 2:18; 10:11; 19:1; Dan 5:4, 23). The Jews had made an idol of the rite of circumcision. Idol is *tselem*, “image”. Humans are to be God’s image.

**“remember that you were at that time you were”**

- Paul uses five phrases to describe their condition as Gentiles.
  1. **“separate from Christ”** – Not separate from Christ’s sustaining providential power (Col 1:17; cf. Acts 17:28). But separate from Christ’s saving personal presence, where all “salvation” is found.
  2. **“excluded from citizenship in Israel”** – Required physical descent from Jacob. Goes back to the Genesis 11 Ziggurat of Babylon incident when God temporarily “disinherited” all the `Gentile nations, focusing on Abraham only.
  3. **“and strangers to the covenants of promise”**
    - A covenant was a legal arrangement, common in the ANE, binding together two nations, tribes or individuals. Four are especially important:
      - **Abrahamic covenant:** c. 2000 B.C. between Yahweh and Abraham promising land, descendents and blessings (Gen 12:1-4; 13:14-18; 15:1-21; 17:1-21). Circumcision of each male was the sign of this covenant. This was a royal grant covenant: unconditional in its promises. This covenant was later confirmed with Isaac (Gen 26:2-5, but not Ishmael) and Jacob (Gen 28:10-15, but not Esau).
      - **Mosaic covenant:** c. 1400 B.C. between Yahweh and national Israel. It promised land, descendents and blessings conditioned on Israel’s obedience. This was a Suzerain-Vassal type covenant, between a King and a vassal state and was conditional in its promises.
      - **Davidic covenant:** c. 1000 B.C. between Yahweh and King David promising perpetual kingship over Israel (2 Sam 7:12-17; 23:5; Pss 89:3, 27-37, 49). This was a personal covenant of blessing based on the love shared between David and Yahweh and had a conditional aspect (related to David’s immediate physical descendents) and an unconditional aspect (related to his eventual descendent, Jesus Christ, the “Son of David”).

- **New covenant:** c. A.D. 33 (Jer 31:31-34; 32:38-40; Ezek 36:23-36; Luke 22:20; Heb 8:7-13) between the Father and the Son. This was instituted by Jesus in the upper room the night before his death (Lk 22:20), and it fulfills the other covenants and supersedes the other covenants (cf. Heb 8:7-13). The Holy Spirit is the sign of this covenant. Holy communion is the covenant meal.
- The Gentiles were strangers to all these until they were later made part of a “New Community” with Jewish believers. They were then made partakers of the benefits of salvation in the New Covenant, which superseded all the others, since Christ fulfilled them.

#### 4. “having no hope”

- Hope is *ἐλπίς*, *elpis*. Outside of a personal covenant relationship with God, the Gentiles had no hope: no hope of divine help and favor in this life nor of any life after death.

#### 5. and without God in the world.

- “**without God**” is *ἄθεος*, *atheos*, “atheist”.
- The Ephesians had many gods (Artemis, Zeus, Athena, Apollo, Zeus, etc.), lesser *elohim*, but not the one true God, who created all the *elohim*.

**<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”**

- “**But now**” – contrasts with “formerly.”
- “**in Christ Jesus**” – contrasts with “in the world” in v.12.
- “**far off... brought near**” – always God’s intention: to bring us face-to-face.
- “**by the blood of Christ**” – Cf. Eph 1:7; cf. Rom 3:25; 5:9; 1 Cor 10:16; 11:25; Col 1:20. By Christ’s blood, not just his shed blood on the cross but his acquisition of “flesh and blood” in the incarnation.

**Take away**

- Because God has placed us “in Christ”, he has changed all five of the conditions once true about us:
  1. “separate from Christ” – He made one with Christ
  2. “excluded from citizenship in Israel” – He made us citizens of heaven with our Jewish brothers and sisters
  3. “strangers to the covenants of promise” – He has made us members of the new covenant community
  4. “having no hope” – He has given us hope and utter assurance in Christ
  5. “without God” – He has made us “with God” in the most intimate way
  
- He has this all out of his profound, inexhaustible love for us!