

Series: Ephesians
Title: Wherefore Remember
Text: Ephesians 2: 11-22
Date: October 13, 2013
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Let's begin by turning in our bibles and reading our text. **Ephesians 2: 11-22.**

Our text begins in verse 11 with these words, **“Wherefore remember.”**

Proposition: In order to humble us and to magnify God and his grace toward us, it is good for a believer to remember the pit of sin and death from which Christ has saved us by the grace of God.

Divisions: 1) It is good to remember what we were; 2) It is good to remember what we are now, and 3) It is good to remember who made the difference.

Title: Wherefore Remember

I. FOR US WHO BELIEVE, IT IS GOOD TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU WERE—Ephesians 2: 11: Wherefore remember,...

Remember, brethren—you who believe by God's grace—that in time past we were a reproach.—**Ephesians 2: Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh.**

These two names—Gentiles and Uncircumcision—are derogatory names that the natural, unregenerate Jews made up to describe everyone that was not a Jew, not a natural descendent of Abraham. “Gentile” is the word “ethnos”—that “heathen race.” To use the term was what men today would call racist—a name of reproach and contempt among the Jews.

But the unregenerate Jew who used the term was himself a “Gentile”—of the heathen race. That is why several times in the old testament God refers to Israel as the Gentiles. Just consider what qualified a person as a Gentile in the mind of a puffed up Jew.

Throughout the entire time of the old covenant up until the time Christ sent Paul into the Gentile world with the gospel, God never sent his prophets to any of the Gentile nations—they were a people without the word of God—that is what an unregenerate Jew was—he had the oracles of God outwardly but he did not have the word of God in his heart. God never gave the Gentiles a mercy seat, no lamb, no high priest—that is what truly constituted one as a Gentile in the mind of a natural Jew. But that is what every sinner is who does not have Christ through God-given faith.

Lest we become puffed, proud, wherefore remember, God created the nation Israel to show that God alone puts a difference between his people, choosing whom he will and passing by whom he will. But an unregenerate sinner always uses the things of God to exalt himself and put down those he thinks are not as holy as himself.

Paul says, “Wherefore remember, in time past” you were “ethnos”—that heathen race who is without Christ, being aliens from God's true Israel, strangers from the covenants and promises of God, having no hope and without God in the world—that is what Paul goes on to remind the Ephesians of. It was God alone who made you to differ. That is what we are to remember.

Then Paul refers to natural, unregenerate Jews as the “Circumcision in the flesh made by hands” because they had the outward form of circumcision. Originally, God gave outward circumcision to Abraham as “a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.” (Rom 4: 11)

Outward circumcision did nothing spiritual for Abraham, nor for anyone else. It was an outward sign, a token, given to show what God had done before, in Abraham's heart by the Holy Spirit. God regenerated Abraham. God gave Abraham a new, clean heart and faith through which God imputed the righteousness of Christ to him and made the everlasting covenant of grace in his heart.

That is how every sinner is made a new creature in Christ. It is what God does, freely in the heart, joining us with Christ, and is the only thing that avails. Outward circumcision or outward uncircumcision does not matter—but a new creature. Neither does any other outward thing done by you or I—it is what God has done for you in the heart bringing you to behold that Christ is our Righteousness—he makes you to differ from another. So we have no room to boast.

But the Gentiles did not have that outward sign of circumcision, so the natural, unregenerate Jews, who had not, themselves, been circumcised in their hearts by God—used this name in contempt and reproach, calling the Gentiles the “Uncircumcision.” Fact was, those unregenerate Jews were, themselves, spiritually, the “uncircumcision.” But they were too proud of their outward form to know it.

Wherefore remember, brethren, in times past, before God regenerated us, we were both of these—Gentiles and the Uncircumcision—just like the unregenerate Jew and just like every holier than thou religious sinner who held us in contempt—there was no difference between us both. Even though we all grew up in a day when the gospel was preached to Gentiles, still, until God worked in our hearts, in our flesh, we were without Christ and without God, with no idea who God is and how he saves. Yet we, too, had our form and our vain ideas that we thought made us better than another. We, too, exalted ourselves in our proud little self-righteous hearts.

Do you remember telling your friends, “This is how I think God saves?” We all did it at some time or another. It was not based on the word of God just based on our sinful fleshly passions. How foolish!

Wherefore, remember at that time we were separated from Christ—**Ephesians 2: 12: that at that time ye were without Christ.** We may have called ourselves Christians—but we took his name in vain—the worst form of taking his name in vain. But Christ had not been formed in our hearts.

Wherefore remember at that time we were foreigners to God's saints and strangers from God's covenant promises—**Ephesians 2: 12: being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,** [or to the promises of the covenant] We were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel—the Ephesian's were foreigners to the things God had given to the nation Israel: the oracles, the high priest, the lamb, the mercy seat and so on. But also they were foreigners to the commonwealth of God's true spiritual Israel—as were those natural, unregenerate sons of Abraham within Israel.

So were we, brethren. We did not know that the covenant God made in the garden with Adam was a covenant by which all mankind died when Adam sinned. We did not know that the covenant God made with Abraham was the everlasting covenant of grace confirmed of God in Christ Jesus—in whom all the promises of God are yea and Amen.

We did not know the covenant made at Mt. Sinai was a covenant of works whereby God used Israel to show man's inability to keep the law of God—to shut our mouths and declare us all guilty before God. We were strangers and foreigners to God and his saints.

Wherefore remember, we were without hope because we were without God in the world—**Ephesians 2: 12:...having no hope, and without God in the world:**

Is it more clear to you that every sinner—whether Jew or Gentile—is “ethnos”—that heathen race, uncircumcised in heart? Brethren, let's learn from the proud, unregenerate Jew, from our own rebellion, that “Knowledge puffeth

up, but charity edifieth.” (1 Cor 8: 1) So brethren, in order to keep us humble and to keep us ever mindful that we are what we are by the grace of God, wherefore remember the pit from which we were dug.

II. IT IS GOOD FOR BELIEVERS TO REMEMBER WHAT WE NOW ARE—V11: Wherefore remember...

Remember, that NOW, we are made near to God—**Ephesians 2: 13: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.** We who were sometimes far from God and far from his saints are now “**made nigh**”—it means made near—how near?

This will bless your heart. It did mine. The root word is a verb which means “to squeeze in the inner curve of the arm.” Remember when scripture says, “the parents brought the child Jesus” to the temple “to do for him after the custom of the law.”—that is, to present the firstborn son to God with the redemption money which the law of God required. Of Simeon it says, “Then took he him up in his **arms**...” (Lk 2: 28) The word “arms” is the root word of this word “made nigh.” Simeon, cradled the infant in the curve of his arms like you cradle an infant.

YOU WHO WERE SOMETIMES FAR OFF BUT WHO ARE NOW GOD’S BORN-AGAIN CHILD—CHRIST, OUR REDEEMER AND OUR REDEMPTION, HAS BROUGHT YOU, CRADLED LIKE A NEWBORN BABE IN THE CURVE OF HIS ARMS, INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES TO DO FOR YOU AFTER THE CUSTOM OF THE LAW—THAT IS TO PRESENT YOU WASHED IN HIS BLOOD, FAULTLESS, BEFORE THE PRESENCE OF GOD—THAT IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE BROUGHT NIGH.

How nigh as he made us? Ephesians 2: 6: He hath raised us up together, and MADE US sit TOGETHER in heavenly places IN CHRIST JESUS. And where does Christ sit? Hebrews 8: 1:...We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

Application: So we who were sometimes far off are now seated together with Christ Jesus as near as God’s right hand! NOW, THAT IS SOMETHING TO REMEMBER!

B. Remember, that NOW, we have access to God our Father by the Holy Spirit—**Ephesians 2: 18: For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.**

Hebrews 10: 19: Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20: By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21: And *having* an high priest over the house of God; 22 Let us **draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Remember, that NOW, you are now more strangers and foreigner—**Ephesians 2: 19: Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.** By his grace, we are fellowcitizens with the saints—natives of the same town—of heavenly Jerusalem, Jerusalem which is above.

Philippians 3: 20: For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

And of the **household of God.** God is our Father. Christ is our Elder Brother. We are sons and daughters of God.

Ephesians 3: 14:...I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15: Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,...

Remember, that NOW, you are God’s building built on the same foundation as the holy apostles and prophets and God dwells in you—**Ephesians 2: 20: And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21: In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto**

an holy temple in the Lord: 22: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

I like to remember that it is God the Holy Spirit moving Paul to give us these descriptions of our nearness to God. He just keeps giving it to us in ways we can understand—so we will know are now made nigh—one with God in Christ—inseparably one! That is something so good to remember.

Illustration: I heard Pastor Henry Mahan tell a story that illustrates the things it is good for us to remember.

He and Doris were visiting Pastor Scott Richardson in Fairmont, where Brother Scott was pastor for many years—where Brother Marvin Stalnaker is pastor now at Katy Baptist Church.

One night they took their wives to a fancy seafood restaurant in town. This restaurant was a very, very nice restaurant in an old two story house they had converted into a restaurant. They received the royal treatment by the wait staff, enjoyed a very nice fancy meal.

As they were admiring how well the old home, to everyone's surprise, Brother Scott said, "Over 50 years ago, I lived in this house." He said, "Growing up, we were very, very poor. My daddy could not afford to take care of me all the time. I was 8-9 years old, so occasionally dad farmed me out.

He would send me to live with someone else. I would work for them for a place to sleep and for food." He said, "My daddy made a chest-of-drawers and gave it to the woman that owned this house to pay for keeping me. I lived in the attic. I ran errands for her to pay for my food."

As Scott finished his story, Brother Henry said, "Scott, when you were that little poor, coal-miners son, living up in that attic, did it ever enter your mind that one day you would drive up here in a new Lincoln Continental, be escorted to a table with this fine table setting, be served this fine food and have money in your pocket to pay for it?" Scott said, "No, it never entered my mind." One of them said you know there are three things it is very good for a believer to remember. This is where I got my outline for this message. 1) Remember where we were; 2) Remember what we are now; 3) Remember who made the difference.

III. LASTLY, FOR US WHO BELIEVE, IT IS GOOD TO REMEMBER WHO MADE THE DIFFERENCE.

Wherefore, remember, WHO brought us nigh—**Ephesians 2: 13: ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.**

Hebrews 9:12: Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by HIS OWN BLOOD HE ENTERED IN ONCE INTO THE HOLY PLACE, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Believer, remember this—God made the difference by his own blood, by the sacrifice of himself. To be "made nigh" means it shall remain forever! God will never forsake his own Son, never forsake his own justice, never forsake his own glory and therefore God shall never forsake you who he has made nigh to himself by the blood of his own Son—**Ephesians 2: 14: For he is our peace, who hath made both one...**

You hear men say, "I made my peace with God." A sinner cannot make peace with God. There is nothing in a dead, God-hating sinner that WANTS to make peace with God, much less anything that a sinner CAN DO to make peace with God.

Only Christ, who is both God and Man, could reconcile his people to God. And only the Spirit of God can enter a sinner making us new creations, make us to be reconciled to God, as well as to our brethren—**Ephesians 2: 14: For HE is our PEACE, who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;**

There was a middle wall dividing God's elect from God AND from one another. The example given is the division that existed between God's elect Jew and God's elect Gentile. But we all unlawfully used God's law to esteem ourselves better than other sinners.

How did Christ make peace between his elect among the Jews and his elect among Gentiles?—**Ephesians 2: 15: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;**

Under the old covenant, God chose the nation Israel to be his peculiar people, passing by all the Gentile nations. It typified God's spiritual, elect Israel. The law of commandments in ordinances—the ceremonial law such as circumcision, the Passover, the prohibition of certain meats, and so on—were outward symbols of the separation God put between Israel and the Gentile nations.

It was meant to show that it is God alone who puts a difference between sinners—choosing whom he will, circumcising the heart, making his people to feast upon Christ the Bread from heaven. But all of those privileges being only “in the flesh” did what religion does unless the Spirit of God works within us. It filled the Jews with enmity toward the Gentiles, boasting that they were the elect, holy people of God and those Gentiles were just filthy dogs.

In our day, sinners do the exact same toward one another. The wall of separation is always outward practice: ones denomination is better than another, the way one conducts their song service is better, ones church government is better than another, this one holds to this historical creed another holds to some other, they exalt themselves by the programs they offer, sadly most pick and choose parts of the law, which the Gentiles were never even under.

Isaiah 65:5: Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. [God says] These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

But Christ, **Ephesians 2: 15, abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances;**

Colossians 2: 14: Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

Ephesians 2: 15:...for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; V16: And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

When Christ is formed within the child of God, he becomes the peace in our consciences, making us repent from our vain self-righteousness, making us surrender to God, to believe on Christ that he alone is our Peace with God. For he fulfilled the whole law of God for us: took the sin of each chosen child, satisfied divine justice, drew nigh to God with his own blood, and reconciled us to God. Therefore, Christ is our Peace with God.

By making each of God's elect, a new creation in the new birth, Christ abolishes the enmity within us toward each other, making us see he fulfilled the law for us, so that we cannot use the law to exalt ourselves over one another.

Now, in Christ, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything—it is not outward practice. We no longer know one another after the flesh. It is being made new in spiritual regeneration that avails. Then Christ makes us take our rightful place as worms, as the chief of sinners, so that we esteem our brethren better than ourselves. Each believer is presented to God in one—Christ—so Christ is our peace with God and with one another.

And, remember, oh remember, that he revealed this in our hearts by coming to us and preaching the gospel to us—**Ephesians 2: 17: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.**

Did Christ come and preach to the Ephesians in person? No. But Christ did come and preach to them when he sent his earthen vessel, the apostle Paul.

Brethren, the same is true of us here today. The authority of the gospel is Christ himself speaking though his earthen vessels. How I wish we really believed this more! If we really believed Christ was speaking today

somewhere, would we let anything hinder us from hearing him? It is as true right here today as when the apostle Paul said,

2 Corinthians 5:20: Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Ephesians 3: 1: For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,... 14: For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. 4: 1: I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2: With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Amen!