

Gentile's Terrible Plight - Alienation

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Preacher: Terry McCutcheon

[0 : 00] We're going to turn now in our Bibles, continuing with our series in Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2, which you will find in page 976 of the Pew Bible.

976. Ephesians chapter 2. And we're picking up where we left off last week. Last week we finished off in verse 10. Now we're going to pick up in verse 11 of chapter 2 to the end of the chapter.

In this second half of Ephesians chapter 2. Let us hear then the word of God. Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh.

Called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision. Which is made in the flesh by hands.

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. But now in Christ Jesus.

[1 : 08] You who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace. Who has made us both one. And has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

By abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances. That he might create in himself one new man in place of the two. So making peace.

And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross. Thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off.

And peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one spirit to the father.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens. But you are fellow citizens with the saints.

And members of the household of God. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. In whom the whole structure being joined together.

[2 : 09] Grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together. Into a dwelling place for God. By the spirit. Amen. And may God add his blessing to this.

The reading of his word. Just a short prayer. Father we do thank you indeed. That you are a sovereign God. Sovereign over all the affairs of man. Sovereign over all the countries of the earth. Father we know that it's no. A government that's going to change our lives. We know it's no a government that's going to change the world. But we know it's the preaching and teaching of your word. Is what men most need.

But Father therefore even governments are still important. You have set them over us. To rule us. To do good and to punish evil.

And so Lord you would help us. We pray that you would help us to. Make the most of the privilege that we have of voting. And as we vote Lord. We pray that in your grace. You might give us a government tomorrow.

[3 : 11] Even better than we deserve. Now as we turn to your word Father. We do pray. That you would speak to us. We ask this. In Jesus name. Amen.

Recently I was. I was visiting a lady. From this church. She had been a nurse in a missionary hospital. In Kenya for three years. From 1959 till 1962.

After she finished that three years. She then went on to another missionary hospital. In South Africa. And there she served for another three years. Between 63 and 66.

And this was during the time of the apartheid. And this lady seen firsthand. How people were brutally treated. All because of the color of their skin.

It's hard to imagine. How oppressed a black South African must have felt. During the apartheid. If you're not already aware. Apartheid meant.

[4 : 13] That if you were black. You were provided with. With separate services to whites. All of which were inferior. If you were black. You attended a different school.

If you attended school at all. And the education you received. Was all geared to prepare you. For a life. In laboring jobs.

Nothing higher. Black people were not allowed to work. Or to live. In the same areas as whites. To work in a white area. Required a special pass.

This pass would be issued. For one magisterial district. Usually one town. Confining the holder. To that area alone. The pass was only valid.

In that area. And only for you. Your family had to remain. Back in the black neighborhood. Being without a valid pass. Made a person subject to arrest.

[5 : 10] And trial. For being an illegal immigrant. Black people were denied. The great privilege. That we will exercise tomorrow. The right to vote. There were beaches.

They couldn't go on. Buses. They weren't allowed to take. Park benches. They couldn't sit on. Water taps. That they couldn't drink from. And most ashamedly.

Churches. They couldn't attend. If we asked anyone. Living under apartheid. To describe what it was like. They would probably speak about.

The awfulness of separation. And alienation. And the shame of being a stranger. To everything that was good. We all probably find it extremely difficult.

To even begin to imagine. What living under these horrific circumstances. Must have been like. Like. But in the passage. We are looking at together. This afternoon. The apostle Paul.

[6 : 05] Highlights. To the church. At Ephesus. That that was exactly. Their former. Spiritual position. Separated. Alienated. And strangers.

To all. That was spiritually good. That was how they were living. Before the gospel. And the grace of God. Came to them. The letter to the Ephesians.

Is all about the church. It is the. The gospel of the church. Remember I said. Affordently to go. That the letter divides into three sections. No. You probably don't. So I'll tell you again.

The letter divides into three sections. The first section. Chapter 1. Verse 1. To chapter 3. Verse 21. The wealth of the church. The wealth of the church. Paul unpacks the.

Riches of God's grace. That he has showered upon his people. In Christ. They have been blessed. With every spiritual blessing. In the heavenly places. In this world of darkness.

[7 : 00] There is. Suffering under the curse of sin. And the fall. God is creating a new humanity. In Jesus Christ. And God has given this new humanity. A name.

It's the church. And the church consists of those. Who have been saved. From both Jew. And non-Jewish backgrounds. And are now united. As one in Christ.

The grace that God has showered upon them. Is to shape. And to master the way that they live. So that the wealth of the church. Is to shape. The walk of the church.

Chapter 4. Verse 1. To chapter 6. Verse 9. In this section. Paul unpacks the. The moral behavior. That comes with being God's new humanity.

Christians have already been saved. And made alive with Christ. Therefore. Live like it. Says Paul. Be what you are. You are already God's children.

[7 : 54] And have been shown immeasurable grace. So now live your life under this new identity. Every part of life. Every part of life. From public to private.

From speech to sexuality. From life at work. To life at home. Everything is to be used for God's glory. And shaped by his grace. Chapter 4.

Verse 1. I urge you to walk. In a manner worthy of your calling. To which you have been called. Writes the apostle. God's new humanity. The church. Is to stand united in Christ.

And under the word of God. They are to live. Distinctly different lives. From the world around about them. This is part of God's plan. And Paul urges them. To live this way.

Because it is in the everyday relationships. Of church life. That God's people. Face the attacks of the power of darkness. In the great climax of the letter.

[8 : 51] The apostle Paul describes. The warfare of the church. Chapter 6. Verse 10. To the end. That great chapter about the armor of God. The armor of God is.

The gospel of Jesus Christ. Both applied to. Our belief. And our behavior. Paul finishes by recapping. Everything that has gone before. In the letter. But in this part.

He uses warrior language. We are to put on the armor of God. We are to put on the gospel. Finally. Be strong in the Lord. And in his mighty power.

Put on the full armor of God. So that you can take your stand. Stand against the devil's schemes. The wealth of the church.

The walk of the church. And the warfare. The warfare. Of our church. And in chapter 1. The apostle Paul outlines. The spiritual privileges.

[9 : 48] The spiritual privileges. Of being in Christ. And having outlined the spiritual privileges. In chapter 1. In chapter 2. The apostle Paul now turns. To a spiritual position.

In Christ. Chapter 2. Falls into two halves. Two halves. That outline two great realities. That God has accomplished. For his people. His church. The new humanity.

In Christ. In chapter 1. 2. Verse 1 to 10. We have already considered. God has made alive in Christ. Those who were dead. The grave clothes of sin.

Have been replaced. By the grave clothes of Christ. In verse 11 to 22. God has made one in Christ. Those who were divided. Jew and Gentile.

Together making one. New people of God. The new humanity. In Christ. In the first 10 verses of Ephesians 2. Paul discussed.

[10 : 46] The salvation of sinners in general. But now he turns to the work of Christ. For Gentiles. Non-Jews. And he does this. As most of the converts.

In the Ephesian church. Would have been Gentiles. Non-Jews. Just like us. So our focus this afternoon. Will be the second half of chapter 2.

But just the first part. So under our consideration this afternoon. Are verses 11 and 12. In this half of chapter 2. The apostle Paul tells the Ephesians.

That separation. Alienation. And strangers to all God's covenant promises. Was their position before they heard the gospel. And put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul does in this section. What he did in verses 1 to 3. He again reminds the Ephesians of their former condition. Who they were. What they were.

[11 : 43] Before they became Christians. Twice in these verses. He tells them to remember. Remember that at one time. Verse 11. Verse 12.

Remember that you were at that time. Paul doesn't. In these verses. He's calling them to remember. Back to a time in their past. And as we saw last time.

Paul doesn't do this. To make the Ephesians feel bad about themselves. He isn't one of those people. Who likes to say to others. Remember who and what you are. For the sake and the purpose of keeping them down.

No. Paul's not like that. Paul reminds them of their former condition. Because he knows. If they fail to grasp. The awfulness of life outside of Christ.

They would never grasp. And enjoy. How privileged they were. In Christ. And where this was the case for the Ephesians. So too.

[12 : 40] It's the case for us. Unless we remember what we once were. We will never fully appreciate. What we are now. Paul follows the same pattern.

As the first half of chapter 2. He reminds the Ephesians of what life was like. What happened. And what life is like now. And this could be summed up in three words. Alienation.

Reconciliation. And unification. Reconciliation and unification. We will consider God willing next Wednesday. But for today. Our focus will be on alienation.

Alienation. So our verses today will be verse 11 and 12. Under the heading. The Gentiles. Terrible plight. Alienation. The Gentiles.

Terrible plight. Alienation. If you look at verse 11. Paul reminds them that before trusting in Jesus. They had nothing to mark. Or identify them as belonging to.

[13 : 39] Belonging to or knowing God. He wants the Ephesians to remember. That at one time. They were Gentiles in the flesh. They weren't like the Jews. Who had the covenant mark of circumcision.

The outward sign. That identified them as God's people. And although Paul points this out in verse 11. Circumcision was only an external sign. Done in the body.

By the hands of men. But it was more than the Gentiles had. With respect to God. The Gentiles had nothing. They didn't have anything. In verse 12.

Paul mentions five consequences. Five consequences of what this meant for them. And every consequence meant that they were without something.

They were without something. And these were all things the Apostle Paul wants them and us to remember. So firstly. The Ephesians former position.

[14:39] Meant that they were without Christ. They were to remember that they were without Christ. At that time. They were separate from Christ.

That is. They were formerly Christless. The Ephesians worshipped the goddess Diana. Before coming to the gospel. They knew nothing about Christ.

Unlike Jews. They had no thought. No hope. And no expectation of coming to a Messiah. And this too is the position we were in before hearing in the gospel.

And what God had done in Christ. Remember back to when we had no comprehension. Of who Jesus was. And what it was he had done. Think how empty.

And meaningless life was then. I remember it only too well. How as a young man. I knew I was empty. I was always wishing. Something or someone might come along and change things.

[15:35] Like those in Ephesus. I had no hope. No thought. And no expectation of a Messiah. I wasn't waiting on a Christ. In fact. The only Christ I ever heard about.

Was the one. Whose name my parents used. Dairy to curse. Sadly. This is the story for most in our city today. Without Christ. Separate from Christ.

Christless. The only time they hear. Or the only time they use his name. Is when it's been used as a curse word. Try to think of the Ephesians. Listening to Paul's letter being read out.

As it got to the bit about their former state. About being separate from Christ. They must have been so grateful. That Paul had come to their city. And shared the gospel. The preaching of the gospel.

Took them from being. Sinners in Ephesus. Separate from Christ. To look at verse. Verse one of chapter one. Saints in Ephesus. The faithful in Christ.

[16:33] Christ. And this is what God is still doing today. In the lives of many who hear the gospel. They go about day to day without a gospel. Without any expectation of a Messiah who could save them.

Then the word of faith comes to them. The gospel is shared. And they go from separation from Christ. To being the faithful in Christ. All because of the God who is rich in love and mercy.

He makes them alive in Christ. Perhaps that's something that will happen in the life of someone here this afternoon. So hope so. So remember. You were without Christ.

With no thought. No hope. No expectation of a coming Messiah. The second consequence that Paul mentions in verse 12. About the Ephesians former position. Is that they are to remember.

That they were once without citizenship. Without citizenship. Alienated from the commonwealth. The citizenship. In Israel.

[17:33] This seems like an odd statement. And we might be wondering what it means. Well it's a statement that means exactly what it says. As Gentiles. The Ephesians were excluded from the nation.

To whom God had revealed himself. You'll remember that God called Abraham. From Ur of the Chaldeans. The father of the faith. In Genesis chapter 12. And said to him.

Go to the land I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation. And I will bless you. And I will make your name great. So that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you.

And him who dishonors you. I will curse. And in you. Or in. In your seed. In your offspring. All the families of the earth shall be blessed. And Abraham's seed.

His offspring. Were the Jews. The nation of Israel. God also gave them his laws. And his blessing. Israel was God's nation.

[18:32] In a way that was not true of any Gentile. Non-Jewish nation. Gentile nations were without citizenship. Alienated. From the commonwealth of Israel. The third consequence of their former position.

Is that they were. Without covenants. Without covenants. They were strangers to the covenants. Of promise. The plural covenants here.

Indicates that as Gentiles. The Ephesians were foreigners. Strangers. Not just to one. But to all the covenants. That God had made. The covenant with Abraham.

His covenant with Moses. His covenant with David. As the Gentiles. The Ephesians knew nothing about any of this. One commentator put it like this.

These covenants. Were for Hebrew years. The Gentiles didn't belong to the privileged people. And generally speaking. They didn't even know God had made such promises.

[19 : 31] They were alienated strangers. While the blessing of the Gentiles. Is included in God's covenant with Abraham. That in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Although this was true. The blessing of God would come to the Gentile nations. God did not make any covenants directly. With the Gentile nations.

The Gentiles were aliens. Strangers. And the Jews never let them forget it. Many of the Pharisees would pray daily. Oh God I give you great thanks. That I am a Jew.

Not a Gentile. What a position. The Ephesians were in. Before Paul brought them the gospel. In relation to God. They were ignorant. And had nothing. Let me emphasize this again.

This is where most people. In our city are. At this moment in time. Even though lots of folks. May have Catholic. Or Protestant backgrounds. They are separate from Christ.

[20 : 27] Alienated from citizenship in Israel. Strangers. To the covenants of the promise. And the result of all this. Well verse 12. Paul says the result. Is that we are.

Without hope. Remember. That you were. Without hope. Where most people in Glasgow. Would need the first three consequences. Explained to them. I am sure they would understand fully.

What without hope means. And feels like. Those words. Without hope. One commentator says. What profoundly. Empty words.

Is there a better way of describing life without Jesus. Engulfed in despair. Hopelessness. The only hope there is. Is that tomorrow might bring something better than today.

But the reality is. We know that it won't. Because we hoped for the same thing yesterday. And it made no difference. This is people's lives. We live among people who are hopeless.

[21 : 24] If we are sitting here this afternoon. And we don't know. Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. We will know well. That this describes our lives. In verse 12.

The fifth consequence. Remember. You were without God. You were without God. Paul wants us to see that. Having no hope in life.

And in death. Is a direct result of being. Without God in this world. Absolutely desperate. And it's not that the Ephesians.

Or the Gentiles for that matter. The non-Jews. Didn't have any gods. Oh. They had gods aplenty. It was said that in Athens. It was easier to find a God. Than it was to find a man.

But the Gentiles. No matter how religious. Or moral they might have been. They did not know the one true God. And friends.

[22 : 18] It's just worth noting. That the spiritual plight of Gentiles then. And the Gentiles now. Is not caused by God. It is caused by our own.

Willful sin. Anyone who is without God. Is also. Without excuse. As Paul writes. In the book of Romans. We all know.

That the true God exists. But we deliberately. Refuse to honor him. This is what the apostle writes. Men who by the unrighteousness. Suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God. Is plain to them. Because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes. Namely. His eternal power. And divine nature.

Have been clearly perceived. Ever since the creation of the world. And the things that have been made. So they are. Without excuse.

[23 : 14] Paul tells the Ephesians. To remember. That this was their life without Jesus. Christless. Stateless. Friendless.

Hopeless. Godless. It's a very sobering assessment. For us Gentiles. Isn't it? We here in this country.

We've. We've had great privilege. Of being. Being raised in a. A country with great. Judeo Christian influence. We have grown up hearing the gospel. We have grown up seeing churches.

All over the places. We walk down the street. We've been grown up. Maybe even with the privilege. Of being took to church. All the days of our lives. We have had a wealth of exposure. In this country. For centuries. A wealth of exposure. So much so. That we may not even be aware. That the gospel was to the Jew first.

[24 : 12] Then the Gentiles. As Gentiles. We have been grafted in. As the apostle Paul writes. In Romans chapter 11. We have been grafted in.

And now sharing the nourishment. Of the olive tree. We have been added. So the apostle says. So remember. You've been grafted in. And don't become arrogant.

And don't become proud. Especially in your churches. Plenty of people will come into our churches. Who are not like us. There may be.

There may be religious differences. Social differences. People from different moral backgrounds. Or immoral backgrounds. Those from different countries.

There will be. Differences racially. And culturally. And as those who have been grafted in. We may harbor in our hearts. The same prejudice.

[25 : 07] The same hate. The same intolerance. The same feeling of self-righteousness. And superiority. Towards folks like these. Just as the Gentiles. The Jews did with the Gentiles.

Don't do it. Says Paul. Remember your terrible plight. As Gentiles. You were alienated. Remember. You have been grafted in.

To the family of God. Remember. That you were regarded as foreigners. Deprived of hope.

Remember what it meant for your sin. To make you despicable in your eyes.

And in God's. Remember. For in those memories. Are the images. That will not only make your salvation. More precious to you.

But will also make those around you. Including those very different from you. Seem very much like you. And precious to you. Remember your terrible plight.

[26 : 05] As Gentiles. Says the Apostle. Alienation. Let us pray. Amen. Amen. Father.

We. Do indeed give you. Great thanks for. The Apostle Paul. Our Apostle. The Apostle to the Gentiles. Father. We thank you for. What it cost the Apostle.

For us to have. Even the letter of. Ephesians. Here in our hands. Despised. Shamefully treated. By his own countrymen. For. Even them.

Taking the gospel. To the Gentiles. And so. Father. We thank you. We thank you. That we are now included. In the citizenship. Of Israel. We have hope. We have God.

We have Christ. Help us to live like it. Father. Help us to keep this. Firm most in our minds. As we go about. Doing good. For the sake of the kingdom. And may this be reflected.

[27 : 01] In those who come into our churches. Who are not like us. Help us we pray. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.