

Ephesians 2 Part Two

Verses 11-22

“FORMERLY” – “BUT NOW” CONTRAST

Before we begin let me draw your attention to something in Paul’s style of writing that you might find interesting. Notice in verse 11 the word “formerly”. “Formerly” is a reference to how things were before they were born again. And then in verse 13 Paul uses the contrasting phrase “but now”. “But now” in Christ you are born again and part of God’s family.

We saw this same sort of contrast in the beginning of chapter two when Paul wrote; *you were dead in your sins, but God made us alive together with Christ*. Paul structures much of this chapter around this before and after theme. He wants us to understand exactly what God thought of us before we were born again and what God thinks of us now that we are born again. Let’s dig into the text.

¹¹Therefore 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—

In Genesis we can read about God appearing to Abraham and making a covenant with him. God promised Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation protected and blessed by God. God said; “I will be their God and they will be my people.” Salvation and knowledge of the Messiah is all revealed through Abraham’s descendant, the nation of Israel.

God asked that all the men of Israel become circumcised as a sign that these were God’s people. I don’t know why God chose circumcision instead of pierced ears or bracelets or maybe wearing a cross around the neck. But that is what is in view here.

The citizens of Israel often looked down on those who were un-circumcised and did not come from Israel. Instead of looking down on those who were un-circumcised they were supposed to be telling and teaching the world about faith in God. In fact one of God's promises to Abraham is that all nations would be blessed by the faith of Abraham. Abraham is the first person to be born again. He came to salvation by faith.

In terms of God's glory, God wanted a bigger audience for His son. He was not satisfied having only Israel know about and cherish and be amazed at the person and work and salvation that was won by Jesus Christ. He wants people from all nations to marvel at His Son. Israel was to go out and recruit a greater audience for the Messiah. Salvation was revealed through Israel. Most people from gentile nations did not know God. The people from the region of Ephesus are among those who did not know God and were not part of the original covenant. That is who Paul was addressing.

¹²**remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.**

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Salvation and eternal life in both the Old and New Testament were introduced through the nation of Israel. God chose a small nation from which he would reveal himself and his plan of salvation to all nations. Those who were a part of Israel were circumcised as part of a covenant with God that these people were set apart as God's messengers of salvation to the world.

Those who were not part of Israel are called the uncircumcision. This was a reference to those who were not part of God's covenant promises and

protections. In essence calling someone uncircumcised was to call someone a pagan or heathen or unbeliever.

ANALOGY - ARE YOU WEARING YOUR CROSS?

I guess in some small way this would be like if we invented a rule that every Christian had to wear a cross. And it was assumed that everyone who was a Christ follower wore one. So anyone who did not wear a cross would be assumed to be a non-Christian.

It was assumed that those who were uncircumcised were not part of the faith community and did not know God. They came from places that people do not understand God. For the most part that was true. The other thing to remember is that salvation is Jewish. If you are a Christian then you have been granted the benefits of a Jew. Jesus is a Jewish messiah. The promise to save people from their sins is a Jewish promise. And we have been invited by God to jump in on those Jewish promises.

¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

IN CHRIST AND POSITIONAL TRUTH

The phrase “In Christ” appears at least 92 times in The New Testament and at least 13 Times in Ephesians. The term “In Christ” is usually mentioned in the New Testament in the context of positional truth.

POSITIONAL TRUTH

Positional truth is about where we stand in relation to something or someone else. Shelly and I are married. That is positional truth. That is a statement telling about how Shelly and I relate to one another. I am my mother’s youngest son. That is positional truth about how I relate to my mother. What does positional truth have to do with my faith? It has everything to do with our faith. Jesus Christ has changed the way that you

and I relate to God. Before Christ our positional truth was that we were enemies of God and objects of His wrath. But now, Jesus Christ has come and switched our positions. “In Christ” we are:

1. **Ephesians 1:1**
To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in **Christ Jesus**:
2. **Ephesians 1:3**
blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places **in Christ**,
3. **Ephesians 1:12**
hope **in Christ** ... to the praise of His glory.
4. **Ephesians 1:20**
¹⁹ the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe... which He brought about **in Christ**, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,
5. **Ephesians 2:6**
and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places **in Christ Jesus**,
6. **Ephesians 2:7**
so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us **in Christ Jesus**.
7. **Ephesians 2:10**
For we are His workmanship, created **in Christ Jesus** for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
8. **Ephesians 2:13**
But now **in Christ Jesus** you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
9. **Ephesians 3:6**
the Gentiles are fellow heirs of the promise **in Christ Jesus**,

10. Ephesians 3:21

to Him be the glory in the church and **in Christ** Jesus

11. Ephesians 4:32

God **in Christ** also has forgiven you.

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¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

¹⁵by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace,

¹⁶and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

¹⁷AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;

¹⁸for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,

²²in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

We are called a temple of the Holy Spirit as individuals. But we cannot forget that there is a way in which we function, as a temple of the Holy Spirit when we are together that cannot occur when we are apart from one another.

