

“Then and Now; Outsiders and Insiders”
Ephesians 2:11-13 –NASB

Illustration: Backpacking in the wilderness

Why should we remember?

- To know who we are and where we've been
- Humility. Mercy. Compassion.
 - We forget who we are and we forget who we were, which can lead to pride and divisiveness.

Remembering brings up pain

Being on the outside looking in; Wounds from words spoken – names and labels; Hopelessness

11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh,

- “formerly” v 2&3
- “in the lusts of the flesh” v 3

who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,”

- WE are the Gentiles. We are the “uncircumcision”
 - “For Jews circumcision, which had been given by God to Abraham (Gen. 17), was the physical sign of their covenant with the Lord, the God of all the earth. It pointed to the particular and exclusive relationship which Israel had with the God of the covenant. The uncircumcision of the Gentiles was evidence of their estrangement from God, which in Jewish eyes could only be dealt with if a Gentile became a proselyte to the Jewish faith.” (*The Letter to the Ephesians*, Peter T. O’Brien)
- Matthew 28:18-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
- Acts 1:8 “and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”
- WE are the nations
 - America is not Israel.
 - *Application:* minister to the nations
 - Goal for this year: Embrace the cross-cultural life of our church
 - Attend Alianza at least once
 - Attend at least one ministry event (outside Sunday morning worship) that is cross-cultural in nature (ESL, After School Program, Arabic Sunday School, Backyard Bible Club)
 - Help serve in one of these ministries

which is performed in the flesh by human hands—

- Notice that the Gentiles are in the flesh and that the circumcision is also in the flesh
 - Remember that Paul is saying this
 - This is talking about the marking out of God's people.

12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise,

- “separate from Christ” – Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”
- Israel was to be a people, with a place, a purpose and a relationship with God. (Ex. 6:6-8)

having no hope and without God in the world.

- “without God” – “atheist” in Greek
- *Illustration:* Illegal immigrants
 - The National Anthem
- *Application:* You may feel like an outsider this morning
 - Songs are strange. Prayers are strange. Preaching is strange. Giving tithes and offerings – very strange.
- *Application:* Where have your insecurities led you to put up dividing walls between you and God’s people and between you and God?

Remembering brings us grace

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

“God saves his people from something and to something. Salvation is a negation of something and the positive possession of something.” (*Far as the Curse Is Found*, Michael Williams)

- “But God” v 4
- “in Christ Jesus”!
 - You are not who you once were
 - Your identity as been changed
- “Blood of Christ” not the blood of the circumcision
 - “Baptized into the body of Christ” – explain baptism as the marking out of God’s people
 - Colossians 2:11-12 “and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”
 - The marking out of the visible people of God in the Old Testament is shown in circumcision.
 - The marking out of the visible people of God in the New Testament is shown in baptism.
- Notice the contrasts (the mighty reversal):
 - “remember that formerly” – “but now”,
 - “Gentiles in the flesh” – “in Christ Jesus”,
 - “Uncircumcision” – “Circumcision”,
 - “separate from Christ” – “in Christ Jesus”,
 - “separate & excluded & far off” – “been brought near”
 - Culminating in heaven
- We live in a divided world
 - Economically, racially, culturally, etc.
 - We are called to a new humanity/community
 - No longer the historic Israel – one race, 12 tribes
 - But now a heaven community from every tribe and tongue and nation (Revelation 7:9)
- *Application:* be a part of bringing others near through evangelism and discipling

Illustration: A banquet in the wilderness