

Ephesians 2:11-16

Many people in our world have a “what have you done for me lately?” kind of mentality. This way of thinking discounts the great achievements and services of the more distant past in light of the perceived slights of the moment. Frankly, human nature is prone to “what have you done for me lately” kind of thinking and this is why there are repeated exhortations in the Bible to “remember”. Today’s passage begins with these words, “Therefore remember...” What exactly does Paul desire them to remember? The answer is that Paul wants the Ephesians to remember the alienation of their lost condition and the truth of the Gospel which binds them together. Essentially, Paul’s goal is for the church to remember the Gospel so that they can worship Christ and enjoy fellowship with others who have also experienced the love of Christ.

1. The state of sinners
 - a. Today’s passage shows us that sin results in alienation
 - b. We see this quite clearly in v. 12 when Paul tells us that those who were separated from Christ were “alienated”
 - c. In context, Paul is speaking to gentile believers
 - i. He is reminding them that they were previously cut off and that alienation took two forms
 - d. First, gentiles were alienated from the covenant people
 - i. Some commentators believe that there is real significance in the way that Paul refers to Jews and Gentiles in v. 11
 - ii. They suggest that his odd phrasing “called the uncircumcision” and “by what is called the circumcision” denotes a bit of a jab at outdated terminology
 - iii. The point then would be that circumcision and uncircumcision have ceased to matter in the new covenant world
 - iv. This might be important but what is undoubtedly in play is the line of separation that circumcision demonstrated
 1. The act of circumcision was a physical, covenant sign that was designed to mark off the covenant people of God from the rest of lost society
 2. In writing to Gentiles, Paul’s goal here is to show the people that Christ has accomplished so much as it relates to their personal relationships and existence
 3. Once they existed outside of the commonwealth of God’s people, they were ignorant of the promises of God and, therefore, without meaningful hope

4. Our sin has separated us from God's family
 5. Those who are not in Christ are cut off, not only from the Lord (which we will get to in a moment) but from one another
 6. Have you noticed this? When Christ is not central, when His commandments are not recognized and followed, when His peace and patience are not evident, sin runs rampant and the result is catastrophic
 7. We all know what its like to be embroiled in turmoil that comes from alienation from the truth
 8. The point is clear, those who are in their sins are separated from the God they need and crave and also from the relationships that He alone can provide in Him
- e. Second, alienated from the Lord
- i. Paul says they were "without God in the world"
 - ii. What a horrifying statement! The entire Bible is really the story of God's saving plan to reconcile the world to Himself
 - iii. It begins with the tragic story of Adam and Eve being cast out of the garden
 - iv. It describes the overarching story of human history as one of hopeless wandering and all of it is because of sin
 - v. Sin separates us from the Lord
 - vi. It erects a wall that we cannot climb
 - vii. It creates a chasm we cannot cross
 - viii. It creates an enemy (God) that we cannot pacify
- f. All of this serves to establish the point which Paul wants his audience (and us) to remember... we were alienated from God
2. The beauty of a Savior
- a. What hope do we have? The answer is Christ
 - b. Jesus bled to atone for our sins (v. 13)
 - i. The effect of this bleeding is reconciliation
 - ii. Whereas we were once alienated from those in the covenant, now Christ has established a new covenant that unites all in Him
 1. Whereas there was "hostility" (v. 14) before, now God has killed it in Christ
 2. Hostility is to be understood as the product of sin. Sin is the underlying cause of hostility because sin is the source of all the wrongs that lead to anger

3. Now, by virtue of Christ's atonement, that sin has been accounted for and there is no need for hostility in the future
4. This is the ground of Christian peace
 - a. We do not deny that sin is real, neither do we deny that sin is wrong, we simply look to Christ, rejoicing that He has atoned for ours, offering us grace and then, in light of our remembrance of His atonement for us, we offer grace to others, understanding that their need for forgiveness mirrors our own
 - b. Those who have been forgiven are eager to forgive and this is the ground of unity in the body
 - c. Those who forget their sin and the blood of Christ which is poured out for them will be eager to seek justice
 - d. Those who recall the grace of God given them will be eager to extend grace
 - e. Those who seek restitution will never be unified because there will always be wrongs that need to be made right
 - f. Those who offer grace will always be unified because no wrong can exhaust what God has done to make us right
- c. Therefore, Paul's goal here is to show us that one of the blessings of the new covenant is realized in community
 - i. He established a new covenant to unite us to one another
 - ii. Now, there are no "ordinances" (to be defined as old covenant religious ceremonies) and laws that divide
 - iii. Whereas the moral law endures, the rituals and sacrifices that so clearly distinguished Israel from the pagans that surrounded have been fulfilled and done away with and in their place, Christ has come to offer salvation to the world
 - iv. Those who are in Christ now have all things in common
 - v. There is no religious requirement we must meet and no binding religious ritual that seeks to separate Gentile and Jew