

# THE "GOOD OL' DAYS" OF DESPAIR

## Ephesians 2.11-12: Message 15, Life before Christ is life far from God

**Theme:** Remember your life before Christ so that you don't leave your First Love.

**(Rev 2.1-7) Why are we studying the Book of Ephesians? To avoid their error: v4.**

- John wrote Revelation in about AD 95; Paul wrote Ephesians around AD 65.
- So, in Paul we see God giving the Ephesians the instruction they need to avoid the problems they would encounter 30 years later.
- (v1-3) The Ephesian church was a *good* church, but (v4) they had grown cold in the faith—in their relationship and walk with the Lord.
- (v5) The prescription given to the cure the problem was two-fold:
  1. **Remember:** (Eph 1-3) There are certain truths that we need to keep in mind in order to walk close to the Lord. This is what we see in the doctrinal half of Ephesians, chapters 1-3.
  2. **Repent & Do:** (Eph 4-6) Along with our mind, God touches our *will*, which in turn affects our walk (what we do). God wants us to live different so that we can live and walk close to Him.
- Today we are going to study a passage in Ephesians that will help us to *remember* those “good ol' days” of our life before Christ.

**We need to remember how it was in time past, before God changed us in Christ. Why...?**

- So we will always draw near (and stay near) to God, and so that we will love Him fervently.
- (1Jn 4.10, 19) We need to remember our “good ol' days” before Christ so that we remember just what we have in Christ *now* and what awaits us in Christ in the *future*.

**There is one word that I think describes our life before Christ (a life without God and salvation): Despair.**

- Many lost people would disagree, saying that they completely happy and content without Christ.
- But *despair* means *to deprive of hope* or *to be deprived of hope*.
- Before Christ, we had *no hope*, and to die without Christ is to face and eternity with *no hope*.
- Life without Christ is a life of despair because it is a life totally and completely deprived of hope.

**I. (v11) Remember the Difference in Time Past**

**A. Ephesians 2.11-22 is a parallel passage to Ephesians 2.1-10: Our Change in Christ**

1. (v11-12 cf. v1-3) Our need for the change: We were dead, separated from God.
2. (v13 cf. v4-7) Our change: In Christ we are made alive, brought near to God.
3. (v14-18 cf. v8-9) How God brought about that change: by grace through faith, by reconciliation.
4. (v19-22 cf. v10) God's purpose in changing us in Christ: His glory and our good in the works he desires us to do in the Great Commission.
5. So, in Ephesians 2.11-12, we go back one more time to our life in “time past,” before Christ...

## **B. In time past, before Christ, we were Gentiles**

1. Much of what is said here could also be said of the Jew without faith, but Paul is writing to Gentiles so he speaks specifically of their condition before Christ.
2. The word *Gentile* simply refers to those who are not Jews, who are not Israelites.
  - a) The Bible refers to the “nations” as Gentiles: Every nation that is not Israel, is “Gentile.”
  - b) A individual is a Gentile if he is not a Jew, either by birth or by becoming a proselyte.
3. Before Christ, in the time past before our salvation, we as Gentiles were *different* (separate).
  - a) (Mat 10.5-7) For example, the Messiah was sent to Israel, not to the Gentiles.
  - b) (Mat 15.21-28) Even Jesus Himself said that He was not sent to the Gentiles (and He referred to the Gentiles as “dogs”—we are *that* different).
4. So, remember that in time past, before Christ, you were a Gentile; you were *excluded*.
  - a) To be a Gentile is to be *different* from the Jew and therefore to be a Gentile is be *excluded* (as excluded as dogs are from one's own children).
  - b) Paul gives us a little more explanation of this exclusion when he calls us the Uncircumcision...

## **C. In time past, before Christ, we were the Uncircumcision**

- Paul specifically uses circumcision to illustrate the difference between Jew and Gentile...
1. (Gen 12.1-3 cf. 18.18) God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham and his descendants.
    - All blessing for all nations comes through Abraham.
  2. (Gen 17.1-14) The physical (outward) sign of this everlasting covenant was circumcision.
    - a) The covenant itself was unconditional: God promised certain things to Abraham and to his descendants, and those promises do not depend on anyone but God.
    - b) However, entrance into that covenant and its blessings *was conditional*: Circumcision.
    - c) (v14) The uncircumcised were cast out, cast away, separated from God, His promises, and His blessings.
    - d) The covenant still exists; it is everlasting. But, only the circumcised were “allowed in.” The uncircumcised were *different*, they were *excluded* (without hope, without blessing).
  3. (Col 2.11-13) Today, physical circumcision is of no value in salvation. Today those saved and blessed by God are those who are spiritually circumcised.
    - a) God has cut the body of flesh away from the soul (and the soul from the spirit).
    - b) (1Pet 2.11) That is why the New Testament makes a clear distinction between the flesh that wars against the soul (and the spirit, joined with the Holy Spirit, seeks to influence our soul).
    - c) The battle ground of our spiritual warfare is the soul: You mind and specifically your *will* (like Joshua said, “*Choose* this day whom you will serve”).

## **D. (v11) Remember the Difference: In time past you were a Gentile, part of the Uncircumcision.**

1. You were excluded from God's chosen nation, Israel.
2. You were excluded from God's everlasting covenant of salvation and blessing, the sign of which was circumcision.
3. But that “time past” doesn't end here. There's more: This difference we see in v11 resulted in (and still results in) *despair*...

## **II. (v12) Remember the Despair in Time Past**

### **A. At “that time”: (v11) The “good ol’ days” of our time past as Gentiles and Uncircumcision.**

1. What follows in v12 is a description of the spiritual state of those without Christ—those who are still separate from God, in sin.
2. Paul gives a list of five things that describe the lost person. It's a description of despair (of the person who has been deprived of hope).

### **B. First: The lost person is without Christ.**

- All you have to do is read through the Gospel of John and not all the “I am” statements that Jesus makes, and you'll see what “without Christ” implies...
1. (John 6.25-71) “I am the bread of life” (without Christ you will die).
  2. (John 8.12-20) “I am the light of the world” (without Christ you have only darkness).
  3. (John 10.7-10) “I am the door of the sheep” (without Christ you are left on the outside with the wolves and the thieves).
  4. (John 10.11-18) “I am the good shepherd” (without Christ you have no one to protect you).
  5. (John 11.25-26) “I am the resurrection and the life” (without Christ you are dead and you will never live).
  6. (John 14.6) “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (without Christ you will never come to the Father).
  7. (John 15.1-11) “I am the true vine” (without Christ you can do nothing).

### **C. Second: The lost person is an alien from the commonwealth of Israel.**

1. The lost person is a foreigner and will therefore never participate in the wealth of God's blessing given to and through Israel (Abraham's descendants).
2. (Deut 7.6-7) Israel is God's “chosen” (the “elect”), not the Gentiles. All other nations are excluded (the lost person, without Christ, who is a Jew and the Seed of Abraham, is totally excluded).

### **D. Third: The lost person is a stranger to the covenants of promise.**

1. The promise was given in Genesis 12.1-3: The unconditional promise to Abraham and his descendants, a promise of salvation and blessing.
2. All the covenants that follow that promise are based on that promise. Therefore, outside of Abraham (as an uncircumcised Gentile), the lost person is a *stranger* to God's promise and His covenants.

### **E. Fourth: The lost person has no hope (none whatsoever outside of Christ).**

1. The wages of sin is death, and after death is the judgment when God will judge the lost person for every thought, word, and deed.
2. (Isa 66.24) The lost will be forever deprived of all hope.

### **F. Fifth: The lost person is without God in the world.**

1. Paul says that without Christ, “You're on your own.”
2. It's like the child that strays from his parents, and he ends up lost on the streets, not knowing what to do or where to go. *Lost*.

**Conclusion:**

**(v13) The hope for the lost is found in the phrase “But now...” (v4: “But God...”)**

- In Christ Jesus it is *now* different for us (it's not like it was before).
- In time past, our lives were lives of despair (deprived of all hope).
- But now in Christ, it's different!

**Remember that! Remember what it was like to be without Christ.**

- It was *not* the “good ol' days.” It was hopeless to be without God in this world.
- Remember where God met you, from where He has rescued you, and *love Him all the more for it.*

**And if you are not sure of your salvation, find a place to be alone with God and talk to Him.**

- Talk with God in prayer: Tell Him you know what you are (a wretched, wicked sinner worthy of death and despair—and if you're not ready to admit that, you're not ready to be saved).
- And then tell Him that you want His Son, Jesus Christ, to save you.
- Turn from your sin to Jesus Christ, and you will find life and hope.
- There is no salvation in another other, only in the Lord Jesus Christ.