

Former Condition Of Paul's Christian Readers

EPH 2:11 Therefore 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—

- The Greek “dio” [dee ah] meaning “therefore, wherefore” connects what follows with what preceded.
- The great blessings the Gentiles were enjoying, by God’s grace, should cause them to remember their former condition.
- Imagine living in a world where the devil is the ruler and might makes right. 1 John 2:11 describes those who do not love and do not have Christ in their lives.
- They had been “dead” in sin and had been delivered “from the domain of darkness.” (Eph. 2:1; Col. 1:13).
- Thinking about their former condition would make them thankful and motivate them to live the new life in Christ and to do the good works God wanted them to do. It should have created thankfulness in their hearts.
- The same is true today. Too often we fail to appreciate the great blessings we enjoy in Christ. The blessings of Christ are incomprehensible. **If God’s blessings are appreciated, they bring immense joy and peace.** (Phil. 4:7).

1. “Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh”

- a. “flesh” (sarx, sahrks) does not refer primarily to their sinful conduct (though sin had dominated their lives), but to the physical man that was uncircumcised.
- b. Gentiles were despised by the Jews because of their “uncircumcision.” This contempt was removed only if a Gentile became a proselyte, that is, converted to the Jewish faith and received circumcision.
- c. This state, along with their sinful conduct, led them to be viewed with contempt by the Jews.

2. “Who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’”

- a. “Circumcision” denotes the Jews. Circumcision was the sign [seal] of God’s covenant relationship with Abraham and Israel. (Gen. 17:9-14).
 - 1) Circumcision was a matter of law for the Jewish male.
 - 2) It was also a matter of pride and even boasting. (Phil. 3:5).
- b. “So-called Circumcision” - Circumcision was intended to be much more than an outward manual act.
- c. Sadly, this was all it was with so many Jews. They did not love God nor keep His commandments. Their hearts were far from Him. (Matt. 15:8).

MAT 15:8 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.

3. "Which is performed in the flesh by human hands" It is clear here he is talking about physical circumcision (Gen. 17:11), not circumcision of the heart.

- a. To be acceptable the true Jew [male or female] was to experience spiritual circumcision [the cutting away of sin from the heart]. (Rom. 2:28, 29; Phil. 3:3). Cutting away sin from the heart is true repentance.

ROM 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

ROM 2:29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

PHI 3:3 for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,

- 1) Both males and females [Jews and Gentiles] were to submit their lives in humble obedience to God through Christ.
- 2) Instead of being humble and obedient servants of God, most of them became arrogant and looked upon Gentiles were utter detestation and fit only for hell.
- 3) Many a male Jew would give thanks that he was not born a woman or Gentile.

- b. The Old Testament spoke of the circumcision of the heart.

DEU 10:16 "Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more.

DEU 30:6 "Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live.

JER 4:4 "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord And remove the foreskins of your heart, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My wrath go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds."

- c. In Christ physical circumcision means nothing spiritually. (Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor. 7:19).

GAL 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

1CO 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.

- d. **Note:** The circumcision that saves is called "circumcision of Christ" in Colossians 2:11.

COL 2:11 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;**

EPH 2:12 remember that you [Gentiles] were at that time separate [far] from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth [blessings of the nation] of Israel, and strangers to [having no share in the] covenants of promise, having no hope [hopeless] and without God [godless] in the world.

1. There was a time when they were:

- a. "separate from Christ" - "choris" [koh ris] means "without," and means they were completely without Christ.

- 1) They had no connection with Christ and without "spiritual blessings." (Eph. 1:3).

2) They were doomed to hell because of their sins and the fact they had not obeyed Christ, the Savior.

3) They were hopeless and had no God to whom they could turn for help and salvation because of sin.

b. "excluded from the commonwealth of Israel."

1) "politeia" [pah lee tay ah] - This word is used only twice in the New Testament.

a) The word can mean "commonwealth, citizenship, state."

b) It is used of "citizenship" in Acts 22:28.

ACT 22:28 And the commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born a citizen."

c) In this context it could mean that until their conversion to Christ they were excluded from all the blessings and privileges of the new Israel - the glorious kingdom of God over which Jesus was reigning from heaven. (Acts 2:32,33).

d) Peter spoke of the Gentiles as being "far off" in his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:39), and it was years later before the first Gentiles came into the church. (Acts 10:1-48).

2) The word can also mean "common wealth, nation." They had no part with physical Israel [the nation of Israel] and the blessings they enjoyed through God.

3) Likewise, they had no part with spiritual Israel [the church - Gal. 6:16] and the great blessings God has bestowed on His "holy nation." (1 Pet. 2:9).

Note: "And" in Galatians 6:16 is from the Greek "kai" [ki] meaning "and, even, also." It can have the idea of "that is." He is referring to "the Israel of God," that is, the spiritual children of Abraham. (Gal. 3:9, 29). See Gal. 1:2,3.

1PE 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, **a holy [dedicated] nation**, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

c. "strangers to the covenants of promise" - They had no part in "the agreements" of promise.

1) This likely has reference to the promises God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

2) It would include the covenant given through Moses on Mt. Sinai. (Exod. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:1-21).

3) For a time they were strangers to the new and better covenant given and ratified by Christ. (Heb. 8:1-13).

4) Because of the arrogance and ignorance of the Jews the Gentiles were not told that God had plans for their salvation.

5) Some Jews were ignorant of the meaning of the promise God had made to Abraham.

GEN 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. "

GEN 22:18 "And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

6) Even the first Christians did not seem to realize that salvation is for all who will trust and obey Christ. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mk. 16:15). See Acts 10:34, 35.

d. “having no hope and without God in the world” - Here are two horribly sad things about their former condition.

1) They had “no hope.”

a) See 1 Thess. 4:5,13; Gal. 4:8

b) God is “the God of hope” (Rom. 15:13), and those reject Him have no hope.

2) “and without God in the world” - They had turned their backs on God and rejecting what they knew to be right.

a) Gentiles knew right from wrong.

b) Read Genesis, Book of Jonah, Rom. 1:18-31, etc. These passages and many others set forth the Gentiles knew right from wrong and were without excuse.

3) Many Gentiles were atheists in the sense they did not acknowledge the true God and worship and serve Him. The vast majority were idolaters or nothing.

e. Paul lists the special blessings given to the Jews.

1) They were “entrusted with the oracles [divine utterances] of God.” (Rom. 3:2).

ROM 3:2 Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

2) In Romans the 9th chapter Paul lists many of the special blessings of the Jews. (Rom. 9:4, 5).

ROM 9:4 who are Israelites, **to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory** [the visible Presence of God] and **the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,**

ROM 9:5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

- Israel was called God’s “firstborn son.” (Exod. 4:22; Hos. 11:1).
- The “glory” refers to the divine glory [God’s visible Presence] dwelling in the tabernacle and later the temple. (Exod. 40:34, 35; 1 Kgs. 8:11).
- The “covenants” refer to the one God made with Abraham (Gen. 15:18), with the nation of Israel in the wilderness (Exod. 40:34, 35; 1 Kgs. 8:11). “The covenants” would also have reference to the covenant God made with David. (Psa. 89:28-37).
- “The giving of the Law” is reference to the Ten Commandments and other laws given at Mt. Sinai. (Exod. 20:1-17).
- “The temple service” would refer to such things as the priesthood, the temple, and the sacrifices.
- “The promises” would refer to the many promise made to the patriarchs. (Gen. 12:2,3; 18:18; 22:17,18; 26:3-5; 28:13,14).

Current Condition Of Paul's Readers

- Paul hastens to set forth the current position of his Gentile Christian readers.
- They were “now” in Christ.
- On the sad side, most Gentiles then and now were completely without God and all of God's blessings.
- The masses have always spurned God and salvation.
- Jesus indicated this would be the pattern of humanity. (Matt. 7:13,14).

EPH 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who formerly were far off [from God] have been brought near [to God] by the [atoning] blood of Christ.

1. Through acceptance of Christ were no longer “far off,” but “have been brought near.”

- Peter spoke of Gentiles, by inspiration, on the day of Pentecost without realizing it. (Acts 2:39).
- The words “far off” were included in the Lord's commission to Paul to preach to the Gentiles. (Acts 22:21).
 - a. “Near” means just the opposite of “far off.”
 - b. They are now “in Christ” and enjoy all His rich, bountiful blessings.
 - c. They are a part of the spiritual body [church, kingdom] of Christ.

2. This is all “by the blood of Christ.” See Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:19.

- a. They had accepted Christ.
- b. They had accepted that salvation was through the shedding of His blood, and now were in a saved state by God's grace.

EPH 2:14 For He [Christ] Himself is our peace [with God and one another], who made both groups [Jews and Gentiles] into one [body], and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

1. “For He Himself is our peace”

- a. Christ “is our peace.” It is through Him that we have peace with God and one another. God, the Father, is also called “the God of peace.” (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 2:9).
- b. Through Him men achieve peace with God, but the context is speaking of peace between Jews and Gentiles.
- c. Jews and Gentiles are brought together in one body through Christ.

2. “Who made both groups into one” - Both Jews and Gentiles are “one.” (Gal. 3:28; Jn. 10:16).

GAL 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

JOH 10:16 "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd.

- a. They have become "one new man" and a part of the one spiritual body of Christ. See Eph. 2:15.
 - b. Considering the contempt that Jews and Gentiles had for one another, no one could imagine this would ever happen.
3. "broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" - He broke down the hostile dividing wall - the wall that kept them apart. The words "of the dividing wall" define "the barrier" as the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles.
- a. This refers to doing away of the old covenant, that is, the law of Moses and animal sacrifices.
 - b. Those who sought to saved by it have no part with Christ. (Gal. 5:4).

EPH 2:15 by abolishing in His flesh [by His sacrificial death] the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained [consisting] in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two [Jews and Gentiles] into one new man, thus establishing [producing] peace,

1. "by abolishing in His flesh the enmity which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances."
 - a. "in his flesh" is reference to Christ's humanity. (Jn. 1:14; 2 Jn. 9; Col. 2:9).
 - 1) Jesus died "in His flesh" on the cross.
 - 2) He made atonement for sins and abolished the Law of Moses that divided Jews and Gentiles. (Col. 2:14; Heb. 10:9, 10).
 - b. "Enmity" is defined by Paul, refers to the Mosaical Law.
 - 1) Such things as circumcision and food restrictions created barriers between Jews and Gentiles.
 - 2) Peter, at first, refused to eat with Gentiles. (Acts 10:28).

ACT 10:28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.

- 3) Gentiles were not permitted into any of the inner courts of the temple.
2. "that in Himself He might make the two into one new man"
- a. This is a description of the unity that existed among Jews and Gentiles in Christ.
 - b. The "old man" was "crucified with" Christ. (Rom. 6:6).
 - c. Both Jews and Gentiles were in "one body" and seeking to please the same Master.
3. "thus establishing peace" - This refers to Jews and Gentiles in the "one body."

EPH 2:16 and might reconcile them both [Jews and Gentiles] in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death [killed] the enmity [the feud between them].

1. “and might reconcile them both in one body through the cross” - It is “through the cross” that this reconciliation to God takes place. See Col. 1:20; Rom. 5:10.

COL 1:20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

ROM 5:10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

- a. Through the cross both Jews and Gentiles became members of one body (the church).
 - b. This body is also known as the kingdom of God, the temple of God, the flock, the church, the new Israel, family of God, etc.
2. “by it having put to death the enmity” - The “enmity” was the law of Moses and the hostility between Jews and Gentiles.

EPH 2:17 And He [Christ] came and preached peace to you [Gentiles] who were far away [from God], and peace to those [the Jews] who were near [to God];

1. “And He came and preached peace to you who were far away”
 - a. Christ did not do this personally. Jesus primarily preached to Jews, and instructed His disciples to do the same.

MAT 10:6 but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

MAT 15:24 But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

- b. Jesus preached to the Gentiles through the apostles and prophets and others.
 - c. This preaching of Ephesians 2:17 was done through the apostles and prophets and other teachers.
 - d. Peter was the first to preach to Gentiles - the house of Cornelius. (Acts 10:36).
 - e. The word “preached” is not “kerusso” [kay roos soh] meaning to “proclaim, preach,” but “euaggeliomai” [you an geh lee ah mi] meaning “to bring or preach good news.” The idea may be **preaching the good news of peace.**
 - f. “You who were far away” is reference to the Gentiles. (Eph. 2:1,2, 12).
2. “and peace to those who were near”
 - a. “those who were near” is a reference to some [mostly Jews] who were seeking to please God.
 - b. Even the god fearing Jews were sinners and needed the blood of Christ. (Heb. 9:22).
 - c. Many Jews, a minority, had already obeyed Christ and “those who were near” refers to them.

EPH 2:18 for through Him [Christ] we [Jews and Gentiles] both have our access [approach] in one Spirit to the Father.

- All three members of the Godhead are mentioned here - Father, Son, Spirit.

1. “for through Him we both have our access” - See Rom. 5:2.

ROM 5:2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

a. Through Christ we have “access” to the great blessings of God listed in these verses and elsewhere in God’s word.

b. “Access” is from “prosagoge” [prah sah goh **gay**] meaning “approach, access.”

2. “in one Spirit” - The “one Spirit” is the Holy Spirit.

a. It is through the teaching of the Holy Spirit through apostles and prophets and others that one learns of Christ and how to obey Him. (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:13).

b. Men come to Christ through the preaching of the word. (Matt. 28:19,20; Mk. 16:15; Jn. 6:45; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18, 21).

3. “to the Father”

a. It is only through Jesus that we have “access” [approach] to the Father. (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). See 1 Jn. 2:1,2.

b. Both Jews and Gentiles were God’s children (Gal. 3:26, 27), and because God’s Spirit indwelt in them they could address God as “Abba, Father.” (Gal. 4:6).

EPH 2:19 So then you [Gentiles] are no longer strangers [outsiders] and aliens [non-citizens], but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household [family],

1. “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens”

a. They have now left their sad, previous state of hopelessness and doom.

b. They were to be accepted as members of the body of Christ in full fellowship as saints.

c. They were not inferior or second rate members of Christ’s body.

d. See Rom. 9:25, 26 where Paul quoted from Hosea. (Hos. 2:23; 1:10). See 1 Pet. 2:10.

1) Hosea foretold Gentiles would be called “my people” and would be called “the sons of the living God.”

2) This was not understood or accepted by Jews until the conversion of Cornelius. (Acts 10:1-48).

2. “but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,”

a. God’s household is the church. (1 Tim. 3:15).

1TI 3:15 but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

b. It is the same as the “household [family] of faith.” (Gal. 6:10).

c. There is no greater blessing than to be a member of God's family!

Believing Jews And Gentiles Are A Building - God's Temple

EPH 2:20 having been built [believing Jews and Gentiles] upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone [or keystone],

- See 1 Cor. 3:9-11. Christ is spoken of as the foundation of the church, but Paul reveals here that Jesus is the not the whole foundation. The church is called "a building" in 1 Corinthians 3:9.
 - Matthew 16:18 reveals the church is built on Jesus Christ. The word "petra" [**pet** rah] does not refer to Peter "petros" [**pet** ros].
 - "Petra" means "a ledge of rock" whereas the name "petros" [Peter] means "a stone or pebble." Peter is a part of the foundation, but not the whole foundation. He had no more authority than the other apostles.
1. "having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" - Prophets would seem to refer to Old Testament prophets and Christian "prophets" - See Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor.12:28.
 - a. Much of the foundation of the church (the body of Christ) is "the apostles and prophets."
 - b. They are a very important part of the foundation, but not the most important part.
 - c. Christ is the most important part being "the corner stone," that is, "the chief corner stone."
 - d. Sometimes Jesus is spoken of as the "foundation" of the church because He was the most important part.

1CO 3:11 For **no man can lay a foundation** other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

2. "Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,"

ISA 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, **A costly cornerstone for the foundation**, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.

MAT 21:42 Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, **The stone which the builders rejected**, This became the chief corner stone; This came about from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes?"

1PE 2:6 For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold I lay in Zion **a choice stone**, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed."

1PE 2:7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, **This became the very corner stone**,"

- a. "Cornerstone" is from "akrogoniaios" [a krah goh nee **i** ahs] and seems to refer to something that binds the structure together. (Eph. 2:21).
 - 1) It is the most important part of the foundation and of the whole structure.
 - 2) Scholars really differ on exactly what the corner stone was.
- b. Christ is also called the rejected stone. (Lk. 20:17, 18).

LUK 20:17 But He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written, **The stone which the builders rejected**,

This became the chief corner stone'?

LUK 20:18 "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."

c. He is called "a stone of stumbling." (1 Pet. 2:6-8).

1PE 2:6 For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed."

1PE 2:7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone,"

1PE 2:8 and, "**A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense**"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

1) Men refused to accept that a humble man, with no wealth, could atone for the sins of mankind.

2) Atonement through Jesus dying on the cross was foolishness to most. It was a "stumbling-block" to the Jews, and "foolishness" to Gentiles. (1 Cor. 1:23, 24).

EPH 2:21 in whom [Christ] the whole building, being fitted [joined] together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;

• "temple" is from "naos" [nah **ahs**] - "inner sanctuary." It denotes the place where Deity dwells.

1. "in whom the whole building, being fitted together"

a. Christians are the upper structure of this "holy temple."

1PE 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

b. Christians are not only the upper structure of the "holy temple," but they are also the priests and are "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

c. Every Christian, male or female, is a priest and Christ is the High Priest. (Heb. 4:14, 15).

d. What a blessing and privilege it is to be a priest of God.

2. "is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;" See 1 Cor. 3:16, 17.

1CO 3:16 Do **you** not know that **you** are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in **you**?

1CO 3:17 If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what **you** are.

a. "you" occurs 4 times in these verses and is plural in the Greek.

b. The "temple of God" refers to the church. Paul used "naos" [nah **ahs**].

c. It refers to the body of the Christian in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

1) Each Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul used "naos" [nah **ahs**].

2) He emphasizes that the body of a Christian "is a temple of the Holy Spirit."

3) Though Paul uses the plural “you,” the context reveals the word “temple” is speaking of a Christian’s body.

4) This should motivate the Christian to keep himself from fornication and other sins. (1 Cor. 6:18).

EPH 2:22 in whom [Christ] you [Gentiles] also are being built together [with the Jews] into a dwelling [holy temple] of God in [by] the Spirit.

1. “in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God”

a. Believing Jews and Gentiles are the upper structure of the spiritual temple of God.

b. Christ, the apostles and prophets were the foundation of God’s temple.

2. “in the Spirit” - Lit “in Spirit”

a. This oneness is accomplished by Christ through the Holy Spirit.

b. They were made a dwelling place for God through the Spirit.

Comments:

1. The word “church” is used in a universal sense in Matthew 16:18.

a. All individual congregations make up this universal church.

b. The universal church is comprised of the individual congregations of Christ throughout the world.

2. The word “church” is also used in a local sense referring to a congregation in a single location. (1 Cor. 1:1, 2; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2).

a. The church is the body of Christ in the community or location where it exists.

b. It can be large or small.

c. The most important thing is not size, but faithfulness to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. A local congregation is not a part of the body [a hand or foot, etc], but is the body of Christ where it exists.

4. Christ is the Head of His body wherever it meets.

5. He is “The chief Shepherd.” (1 Pet. 5:4).

5. All must submit to His authority as Head and King. (Matt. 28:18).

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