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FIVE BIBLICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF AN UNSAVED MAN

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
NUMBER 19
EPHESIANS 2:11-13

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EPHESIANS 2:11-13 "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

In our last study we saw the conflict between Jews and Gentiles, between believers and unbelievers. Now we move into those verses which describe the barrier that exists between man and God. Man was born behind the barrier with an old sin nature. This means that a man is born spiritually dead and is incapable of having fellowship with God. There are no holes through the barrier through which sinful man may pass, no way to break through or climb over or under. Man is in a hopeless and helpless situation in so far as his relationship with God is concerned. Man is a sinner and the penalty of sin is spiritual death. Man also has the problem of physical birth. Man is born physically alive but spiritually dead. There is no way for man, in his sinful state, to have any fellowship with God. There is no way man can reach God and break through that barrier. If man is ever reached for salvation, it has to be the work of God. God removed the barrier because he loves man and desires to have relationship with man. But man can't break through that barrier, go through it, go under it, go over it, or get through in any possible way. Good works and self-righteousness will not take a man through that barrier, but God has removed that barrier by what we call redemption. Christ solved the problem by paying for man's sins on the cross. The problem of physical birth is solved by regeneration. Faith in Jesus Christ is the way and at the moment of salvation God imputes his own righteousness to the believer. This is the moment of justification. Man is therefore vindicated by being the recipient of God's righteousness. The problem of the character of God is satisfied by propitiation. God the Father is satisfied by the work of God the Son. Position in Adam is changed to position in Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:22 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Now the barrier is gone and every problem connected with that barrier was solved at the cross. So there is one way to be saved and that's the way of the cross. Reconciliation means that God has removed the barrier.

JOHN 3:36 "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

God and man are involved in the contract. Man believes in Christ and that is a non-meritorious act. God does it all in salvation and man can do nothing.

EPHESIANS 2:12 "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"

This verse describes how we looked before we met Christ. This is the way we looked when we were behind the barrier. In this verse we will see five things about an individual who is behind the barrier. It is being said here about the Gentiles, but it is true of every unbelieving member of the entire human race. God is on one side of the barrier and man is on the other side.

"That at that time" refers to the time before they accepted Christ. Now what were we like back there? "Ye were" is an imperfect, active, subjunctive of "eimi." "Eimi" is the verb that designates the status quo, and it means man kept on being behind the barrier, he kept on being like he was. Now one can be behind the barrier and make certain changes in his conduct or in his beliefs. Man can be behind the barrier and even change his behaviour pattern. But this Scripture says that no matter what man does, he keeps on being behind the barrier, he keeps on being five things. Personal reform, intense service, a change of behaviour patterns, all added together won't change men from sinners to saved men. Man is helpless behind the barrier.

Therefore, let us look at five pictures of man behind the barrier.

1. WITHOUT CHRIST.

This is the first characteristic of every person who is behind the barrier. The unsaved are without Christ. When one is minus the Lord Jesus Christ he is hopelessly lost.

ACTS 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

JOHN 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

It doesn't matter how clean one is or how respectable one is, without Christ man is lost, hopelessly lost. All kinds of people are behind the barrier. Moral people and immoral people, religious people and irreligious people, but all behind the barrier are without Christ. (Gandhi was behind the barrier. He was moral, he did much for India, he lifted the load from many of his people, but he was behind the barrier. When Dr. E. Stanley Jones pressed the claims of Christ upon Gandhi, he rejected and never in his lifetime did he ever give one evidence that he accepted Christ as his own Saviour.) There is only one way to eternal salvation and that is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

2. "ALIENATED FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL"

This means to be alienated from the ultimate source of something. The Greek word is "apollotrioo" and it means to be a foreigner, from the ultimate source of something. In the Old Testament Christ was preached in many ways. Abraham became a Christian by believing in Christ.

* GENESIS 15:6 "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

This term "Commonwealth of Israel" referred to the Jews who had crossed through the barrier by believing in Christ and had been converted, just like Abraham, Moses and all the other born-again Jews.

"The commonwealth of Israel" didn't refer to the Jews as a race, but to Jews who had become Christians by having faith in Christ. Those who were aliens, were unbelievers in Christ. The commonwealth of Israel is explained in Romans 9:6-14 and it refers to all regenerated Jews. On this side of the cross we believe in the historical Christ, they believed in the prophetic Christ, but both groups believe on the same Saviour.

3

STRANGERS FROM THE COVENANT.

There were four covenants the Lord made with Israel. There was the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, the Palestinian Covenant, and the New Covenant. Each of these covenants had an eternal life clause included. But here is another conception of a covenant and that is the conception of a contract. God set up a covenant, a contract, at the time man first sinned. In Lev. 2:13 eating salt in agreeing to the terms of the covenant is analogous to having faith in Christ. Before accepting Christ one is outside the contract covenant. Once one accepts Christ, he has a contract with God. In the contract God provides the salvation, and all we do is to receive what he provides. Then in life, as the sum and substance of what God provides on the basis of that contract, are the provisions in those 7,000 promises he has made to us in the Word of God. Once you move into eternity, there is a perfect provision for all your needs.

4.

HAVING NO HOPE.

It is a perfect contract and it depends on God who makes the contract. But having no contract also means having no hope in the world. Between the point of salvation and eternity we live by faith and hope. Hope is a technical word for Heaven and Eternity. The contract brings hope. This is not the same word as we use when we say, "I hope so." Someone may ask you, "Are you going to heaven when you die?" And you answer, "Well, I sure hope so!" Now that is not the use of the word "hope" here. Hope here means absolute assurance of a perfect home in heaven. Our contract says we have an eternal home. Our contract says we are going to be with him forever. Our contract says that when we see him we will be like him. Our contract says that our resurrection body cannot be destroyed.

JOHN 14:1-3 "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

2 TIMOTHY 1:12 "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

1 JOHN 3:2 "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Hope means absolute confidence in the future. This paragraph says that every believer will have dying grace. The contract depends on God and he will not go back on the contract. He is immutable, he can't change and he won't.

The word used here "Having no hope" is a present, active, participle of "echo" and is constantly, continually not having any hope. Now that is what people have without Christ.

5. WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD.

Now nothing is worse than this state, being without God in the world. There are just too many problems for us to face to live in this world without God. This is the most horrible state in which a man can find himself. Until the moment you accept Jesus Christ as Saviour you are without God in the world. Now, don't try to by-pass Christ and go straight to God yourself. You can't do it that way. The barrier is too great.

Now all these five statements mean exactly the same thing. They all mean no relationship with God through Christ. No contract, no hope, no fellowship, no relationship.

EPHESIANS 2:13 "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Now we come to a fantastic dissertation on how these five miserable conditions can be remedied. Here is the pulling down of the barrier. Here is how the relationship is established, how the contract becomes effective, how an alien becomes a member of the family, and how one had eternal hope. "But" is a conjunction of contrast. This is a contrast between the wrong side of the barrier and the right side of the barrier. The word "Now" is used here to remind us that salvation is always available. "Now is the accepted time" means that any time is a good time to be saved and the best time is now. In this verse the blood of Christ is going to be used as an analogy. The blood of Christ is here used to illustrate how we get to the right side of the barrier. "In Christ Jesus" is positional truth and means that this is the position of every believer. In the angelic conflict the Devil is fighting with all his power to keep men from being saved. This is the hidden part of the conflict which always goes on between God and Satan, and it is intensified during the church age. We now live in the intensification of the angelic conflict and the Devil and his millions of demon helpers fight to see that no one believes in Christ. You see, once a man believes in Christ, the Devil knows the issue is settled once and for all as far as salvation is concerned. The Devil knows one can never be lost after he is saved, whether you know it or not. So the Devil fights to keep a man from being "In Christ Jesus." From the moment Christ sat down at the right hand of God, until the moment the church is raptured and the Tribulation begins, the angelic conflict will be intensified. During the church age every believer is a target and God has made provision for every Christian in every situation. God has provided the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and all the other assets the Christian needs during his lifetime. Once you are in Christ you are there forever.

ROMANS 8:38-39 "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things, to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Paul says here, "But now in Christ Jesus" and once you are there you can never get out. No one can commit a sin so great that he can break the relationship. Whoever gave you the idea that you are so great that you can commit a sin that is too big for the plan of God? You have heard the statement, "The bird with a broken pinion never soars as high again." Well, that may be true of birds but it is not true of men. God majors in the repair of broken pinions and once you confess and get back in fellowship the pinion is just as good as ever, even better.

"Ye who were sometimes afar off" is an idiom used to describe Gentiles. "Are made" is an aorist, passive, indicative of "ginomai". This is something you receive and the thing you receive is position "in Christ Jesus" and you are a new creature.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

The barrier has now vanished and in Christ you are a new creature. The passive voice here means you receive this salvation, you don't earn it, you don't work for it, and once you get it, you don't deserve it.

"By" the blood of Christ is in the instrumental case and it means the blood of Christ is the instrument by which we are saved. But get ready for a shock--THE BLOOD OF CHRIST HERE IS NOT A REFERENCE TO THE PHYSICAL BLOOD OF CHRIST. Keep an open mind and listen to what is being said here. The blood of Christ here is pictured best by the sacrifice of a lamb on the altar. The priest takes the lamb, cuts its throat and the blood runs out of the body and the lamb dies. The blood flowed out and the lamb died by bleeding to death. But Christ didn't bleed to death on the cross. He died spiritually for all of our sins, paid for all of our sins, and then still alive and still with blood in his body he said, "finished." Remember, he was still alive and still had blood in his body and our redemption was completed.

LEVITICUS 17:11 "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

That phrase "the life of the flesh is in the blood" applies to animals and not to human beings. Your life is not in your blood. Your life is in your soul. So Leviticus 17:11 refers to animals only. Their life is in their blood. But human life is in the soul, and after all the blood is gone from a human body, that person is still just as much alive as ever.

On the altar the animal died physically and bled to death. This is an analogy, a picture, an illustration of what happened when Christ shed his blood for us on the cross. Christ died twice on the cross. He died spiritually and then he died physically when he gave up his human spirit. So the physical death of the animal on the altar is a picture of the spiritual death of Christ. This is what we call a representative analogy.

But this is too big an issue to complete here. Next time we will study in detail the doctrine of the blood of Christ.