

I want us to come to this passage with a bit of shock fresh in our minds. Imagine we were guests at the Wedding Feast in Cana. We just learned that Christ turned water into Wine thereby abolishing the OT ceremonial 礼仪性的 sacrifices and declaring himself as long awaited Messianic Priest. We sit down ready to Hear what this all means.

Paul just explained about the Cosmic Reconciliation 宇宙性和好 between Sinners and Christ is through Grace alone as a Gift from God. Through Grace we are saved through faith. But Paul continues on this interesting roller coaster. He turns back to the old news for a moment, helping us to truly understand the Good News.

So, let us come this morning **with new eyes, ears, tongues, and hungry hearts**. For in today's passage there is the story of our lives, it is the story of how we all come gathered here today.

**Gentiles in the Flesh
Godless Foreigners without Hope
But Now.....In Christ**

Gentiles in the Flesh

v.11- After telling the Greatest gift in the whole world: salvation by Grace alone, ... Paul turns back to sin. Why? After saying we are saved from being a puppet 傀儡 of Satan, we are saved by Grace through Faith; Paul now turns back to sin. Interesting!

He is right though: the Ephesians were not of Jewish decent. They could look in a mirror and know they were not Jews. They could look on their bodies and know they did not have carved into their flesh the sign of separation, the physical sign of the Covenant.

This is exactly what Paul is drawing attention: this bloody sign of Circumcision 割礼. Seems odd but Paul is teaching, so let us learn. What is Circumcision?? It was first instituted with Abraham back in Genesis. God first makes an unconditional covenantal grant of blessing to Abraham in Gen 15, and then in ch 17 prescribes, "you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins", which shall be a sign & practice of remembrance between God and his people.

This covenantal sign was not to be neglected; it was of absolute necessity. In Exo. 4 Moses himself was almost killed by the Lord for neglecting to circumcise his children.

Any who neglected this physical sign were cut off from the community. And being cut off from the nation meant being cut-off and far from God himself (Exo 12:48). Circumcision taught the people that they belonged to the Lord. As the Knife passed over their bodies and only cut a piece, it was a reminder of the Lord's covenant with Abraham.

BUT it also warned of judgment through the shedding of blood.

At least that is what circumcision was in the beginning, it had slowly **morphed** 蜕变 along the way in the minds of the Jews. In Paul's mind, people began to arrogantly boast of being God's people. Bearing the sign of the covenant and so looking down on outsiders. They were Forgetting the fullness of the Abrahamic Covenant, which included God's work of Blessing the nations:

they viewed gentiles as **uncircumcised scum and unclean pagans** 异教徒. Jews were forbidden to intermarry with them, forbidden to eat, prohibited from having any fellowship with such **unclean heathen**.

Think about that, Paul is telling the people that they are saved by Grace, but wants to remind them of their ill treatment by God's people. Their painful daily social interaction with the Jews reminded them that they were Gentiles like us, mocked and ridiculed.

But why does Paul repeat the reminder to the Ephesians of their former lives? So we too don't become arrogant and haughty 傲慢. Paul has to constantly remind us that Salvation is *purely* of Grace. Not grace as a reward for doing good. Not a grace that leads to arrogance. We have received Grace in the face of our filthy 污秽 sins. Our Salvation rescued us from being 'by nature children of wrath.'

So Paul calls us to remember so that we might be filled with Gratitude. We have been saved by God, and we are grateful for His work.

Godless Foreigners

Let's be clear, Paul does not stop there. He is not going around saying that people need a Relationship With God: ... that is an easy evangelism slogan 口号, but it's mistaken.

Paul is not saying, we need a relationship with God. He is saying we all have one, and it's a relationship with sin and death in our bones; we are born as objects of God's wrath.

The Heidelberg points out, we have inherited a sin nature from Adam/Eve, we are under God's terrible displeasure on account of both our INBORN and actual sins. We deserve the eternal wrath of God. Your non-christian friends, your non-christian neighbors, don't need a *relationship* with God,

they need what we all Need: saved from sin, and made Righteous in Christ by Faith.

This is why Paul reminds us we all come into this world without Christ. We are foreigners of the worst kind. We are ignorant. Alienated from the citizenship of God's covenant community. Look at V.12 – we are ignorant of the Covenantal Promises – aliens to the comfort and joy.

Many in this church have grown up in a community of friends and family. You have grown up around Christian nurturing 培养 people. You might not remember what it feels like to be a foreigner, A Real Foreigner? Not like traveling to a nice tropical place where everyone is nice and wants you to buy stuff.

Being in a country where you don't know your way around, the customs, or the language. Everything feels uncomfortable and is challenging. Imagine being in a place where the people **don't like** you, they are threatening, and treat you like an unwanted outsider.

On top of being looked down on, the country is in the midst of the **bloodiest civil war** ever. Everywhere you look is war, fighting, bombs, death, and utter despair. Depression is rampant 猖獗. Life looks dark and meaningless. That's a foreigner. Confused and scared, hiding in a corner, curled up in the fetal position? You have no one and nowhere to cry for help. You are alone and deserted in this war zone

This is Life for all who don't know Christ. Every person without Christ is in the middle of the warzone of Life: the seed of the woman, verses the seed of the Serpent. The Light of Christ versus the darkness.

Alone and wounded, an easy target without the Hope of Christ. Remember this the next time a visitor walks in our doors.

We are born completely ignorant of the covenantal promises: ignorant of the promises made to Adam, Abraham, and David; promises of the Great Coming One. We are **strangers of all the promises of comfort that are found only in Christ--- being ignorant means being Hopeless**

We come into the world “...having no hope...” hopeless with nowhere to turn for comfort or deliverance. Hopeless and helpless drifting about in a lost and fallen world, lost in your fallen condition.

There is no insurance plan to help us, no government bailout to step in.
People come into the world **Godless and without Christ**.

But humans are so desperate for hope they will cling to anything. Humans we were made to worship God, and many turn to false hopes and idols for some inkling of Hope. The Ephesians are good examples: in Ephesus they had the colossal 庞大 temple of Artemis, whom they would bow and worship. We read in the book of Acts (19) that when Paul brought the Gospel of Christ to Ephesus, the new believers burned their magic books, worth 50,000 pieces of silver (Acts 19:19). These Gentiles spent all they had worshipping things that were not God, worshipping things made of stone.

They were zealous worshipping deaf, dumb, and mute idols; but despite all their efforts to fabricate 制成 their own religion they were still godless and Hopeless in this world. We do the same thing when we erect the walls of fabricated comfort around us. Erecting things that make us happy thinking this is what life is all about.

This is how the Ephesians lived, this is how we live today ... but **Look more closely at v.11--** Paul draws attention to something easily missed in English. That phrase 'circumcision made by hands', it's an interesting thing. While OT priests did use hands to perform the cut, Paul is pointing out something more

Paul says it in an unusual way: In every occurrence in the OT, being made with the Hands refers to Idolatry 拜偶像. Making idols and worshipping false gods. Paul is denouncing the Jews for taking the good thing God instituted, and making an idol. Taking something that was meant to point them to God, and turning it into a source of pride arrogance.

The Sign that was Supposed to point to God, now became navel gazing. It now became something they flaunted 炫耀 as a Badge of pride, declaring they were better than the rest of the world

It is easy to fall into this temptation in everyday things; We take something good like Christian schooling, Cadets, helping the homeless, and every other kind of good work, and turn it into an idol and a merit 功劳 badge. *Showy puffed up religion* which attempts to tell the world, 'I am better than you'.

Let us remember the words of Romans and Genesis (4:11, 15:6), Abraham received the promise **before** he was circumcised in his flesh, “Abraham believed the Lord and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Circumcision was a sign and seal of the inward reality already present. God justifies the undeserving by Faith.

It is the Gift of God in Christ that makes us Righteous, not the work of our Hands.

Our prideful hearts have been crushed and we now live having been given new hearts in Christ. This is not a source of pride and arrogance, but the Gracious grounds for rejoicing and dancing in the Lord.

So Paul puts before us again our sinful condition that we might cry out as he does: “Oh wretched person that I am!! Who will deliver me from this body of Death??” (7:24)

“**But Now...**” there is hope in the next verse: **But before we Do ...**

Beloved: Look at v.13 BUT NOW

That great 'contrasting conjunction,' Oh such **power, wonder, and awe!! We were lost and dead: But Hear Now with resounding thunder the Words of God**

BUT NOW IN CHRIST JESUS.

That is what you were, but Now you ARE something quite different -- by Grace alone, through faith in Christ alone, you have received a totally **different circumcision**. Not one that makes you prideful and boastful, instead you have received a circumcision performed by a greater priest; one who circumcises without hands.

A Far Greater Circumcision- **Col. 2:11** "you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ!!"

There is no room to boast, you cannot show-off this circumcision. It is a circumcision of the spiritual heart, cleansing us from the inside out.

The OT sacrificial system is rendered obsolete, as there is no longer a need for bloodshed. None of us brought live animals today to the altar. Our animals don't go to the Altar but to the BBQ Grill.

We don't have to cut our children for Religious reasons Christ himself went to the altar. He had his flesh tortured 折磨 and pierced. He Shed His Blood, we no longer bleed to atone for sin----
instead we engraft our covenantal children HERE with water.

Notice even more what v.13 has --- But Now IN CHRIST. You are not merely known by God, you are not merely a friend, but you are engrafted with his son.

CALL:

Maybe Christ is working to seek you today. Maybe you have been waiting to come to the Lord. Maybe you have been waiting because you have doubts. But I turn you to the Word of God, none of us is any better than you; none of us are more pure in ourselves. None of us are stronger, or smarter, or more holy.

But through hearing the Gospel we know this: we all come needy. Overwhelmed with living as godless foreigners, and desiring to receive His Gift of becoming a welcomed Child.

Christ calls out to all of you today: the Far and the Near. Those who are NEAR and know the things of God, who have learned and respond to his Gospel, then rejoice today. Do not be prideful or arrogant of what you have received. Always remember that you are no better than any other, and you were once were a Gentile 外邦人 too.

it was not you who built your way up into heaven. But it was Christ who came down,

Christ rescued you, washed your wounds, heals you, and holds you in his arms. It is him who died, him who was first raised, and exalted into heaven, and is even now preparing the banquet table for his wedding day.

Also be confident when evangelizing for there is none so sinful, there is none so FAR that they cannot be brought close.

And to you who think you are far, I ask you, where are you that an infinite God cannot rescue you?

God asks you this from Jeremiah (23:24) : "Where can a person hide that I cannot see them? Do I not fill heaven and Earth?"

What do you think you have done that is worse than any of us? Do you think your sins are more powerful than Christ's wounds?

Do you think that your blood is more unholy than Christ's blood is Holy?

I cry out to you who feel far off: Come near by the Blood of Christ. His holy Blood is shed for the remissions of all your sins; He was raised from the dead to rescue you in righteousness for life.

He grants Not simply *a relationship* with God, but pure and holy Restoration 复原 with Your Father in Heaven. He will wipe away your tears, he will mend your sorrows, he will heal and enliven your soul.

All these gifts, the wonder and beauty of having Christ as your savior and high priest, are all received by crying out to him in faith. Trust that he has done what you could not, stop trying to fix yourself before you come. Stop saying your will come when you are ready, stop saying you want to be older. Do not waste another moment of your life apart from Christ.

Today citizenship in the household of God awaits: you are no longer Foreigners & Strangers, ... Through Faith we are Sons & Daughters ... We are One family

Come all you who are Near, Come all you who are Far. Come together under the one who has rescued us from man-made religion 人造的宗教 --- Gather around Our Priest

We gather around the One who circumcises our Hearts, and restores our Soul.