

Brought Near by the Blood of Christ

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Bible Text: Ephesians 2:11-13
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Let's grab our Bibles and let's go to Ephesians again, Ephesians 2, and look at verses 11 through 13 tonight. "Brought Nearby the Blood of Christ." Ephesians 2:11-13. Once again, we're building on these glorious precepts, one built upon the other, as you come from chapter 1, verse 1, all the way through chapter 2, verse 10, and now he's giving some application of what this means to his audience and the working out of it more in life. And he says they're in Ephesians 2, beginning in verse 11, talking to non-Jews now, talking to Gentiles in Ephesus, he says,

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-- 12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Oh, look at that conjunctive word in verse 13,

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Now again, it's so important to grasp the glorious wonderful truths of sovereign grace and salvation he has already unfolded so that you can stand with great security on this fact that though you were excluded from God and separated from the commonwealth of Israel, you were one as far as being near to the things of God, far far off, but through the merits and here he says the blood of Jesus Christ, you were brought very very near. What a glorious truth. That's pretty good to hear if you're a Gentile and all of you are Gentiles. We are not Jews.

I. Gentiles ceremonially excluded. That's what he points out, that you Gentiles, you folks from North Alabama, you non-Jews were ceremonially excluded. Notice how he says it there in verse 11, he says, "Therefore remember," in other words, this is how it was viewed, this is how it was commonly thought of from God's called people, the Jews, that "the Gentiles in the flesh," were called the, "Uncircumcision," by the so-called "'Circumcision,' which is performed in the flesh by human hands." The Jewish teaching

on circumcision was that being a Gentile and your sons were not circumcised on the eighth day after the birth meant that they were excluded from the family of God. Sometimes we use the phrase excluded from the commonwealth of Israel. So Gentiles were categorically rejected by God according to traditional Jewish teaching and what happened was the Jews instead of seeing the spiritual truth behind circumcision fell only to seeing the physical ritual of circumcision as important. The Jews developed therefore a self-righteous abhorrence of all that were "uncircumcised." All the non-Jews did not have the ritual of circumcising their little boys eight days after birth so they just despised the uncircumcised and they would sometimes use that phrase in the most derogatory and demeaning tone, the uncircumcised Philistine. It was the centerpiece of what they held to in their covenant with God.

Now, it was true that God had chosen, even elected the Jews among all the nations of the earth and had constituted the covenant sign of circumcision with them. As a matter of fact, keep your Bible ribbon in Ephesians 2 and let's go and look at this over in Genesis. Go to the very beginning when God began his people through a man called Abraham. Genesis 12:1. We'll go through verses 1 through 3 and let's see the foundation stone of this. Genesis 12:1, "Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you.'" In other words, I want you to separate from everything you've been formerly associated with because I'm going to start with you and we're going to form a brand-new people, a brand-new nation of people which will be uniquely my people.

Continuing in verse 2, "[I will] make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing," and verse 3, "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 will be blessed." Now, the Jews got everything about that in the following generations, that is, except the very last phrase, "in you," Abraham, "all the families, all the families of the earth shall be blessed." In other words, it's not just for those who are the bloodline of Abraham but through Abraham, i.e. through the one who would come of the descendant of Abraham, Jesus Christ, all the families of the earth would be blessed. That included Gentiles and they didn't get that. They left that out and that's a good illustration of how a person can have nine good points of doctrine and have one false point of doctrine and it cancels out all the rest. If you miss "all the families," you've missed something very important. God is not going to have part of his family left out and that's what the Jews were doing.

Now go a little bit further to Genesis 17 beginning again, if you will, in verse 1. Genesis 17:1, "Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly.'" Now you know up to this time Abram has not had any children. His wife Sarah is barren but he says, "I am going to multiply you exceedingly."

Verse 3, "Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, 'As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations.'" Plural.

Not just one nation. "The blessing I have is going to come to many many nations, Abraham."

Verse 5, "You shall know longer be called by the name of Abram, but your name shall be Abraham and I will make you a father of a," here it is again, "a multitude of nations." Jews forgot that later on. "I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.' God said further to Abraham, 'Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This covenant which shall be between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you is to be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.'" Now again, selectively the Jews saw Abraham is the father, Abraham received the blessing from God, the mark that we are God's people, God's covenant people, is the ritual of circumcision performed on our baby boys eight days after they are born, but they forgot the plural application of the preceding promise, a multitude of nations will be blessed through you.

It's convenient how we can do that. It sounds like I've been picking on the Southerners in my sermon this morning and tonight, but there were times particularly in the South when people of other races were not viewed by some as being even a possibility of conversion and being part of the family of God. The apartheid movement in South Africa, when we first started going to South Africa and planting churches in the bush many years ago, the country of South Africa was a fabulous country: prosperity, the standard of living was high. The government paid true Gospel preachers to preach the Gospel on their television. I'm not talking about the junk we hear that's called Bible preaching, I mean these guys preached the Gospel. But they had one glaring failure: many, not all but many of the South Africans held to a philosophy of apartheid which meant that the black skinned man was unable to be the elect of God.

They missed the promise. Multitude. All the families. Multitudes of nations. And the Jews did that same thing. They became very closed in and very arrogant and very elitist about us and none other are part of the family of God. So instead of viewing their election in humility and as an unmerited favor and therefore being God's light to all the peoples of the world, the Jews held the blessing in selfish pride and they neglected the spiritual truth that God had shown them, and really the truth behind everything God showed them through their ceremonial law and through the teaching of the prophets was that salvation is by faith. Genesis 15:6 says "Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness," they missed that. And that Christ, Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah. He was the fulfillment of the law and all the ceremonial law. Romans 10:4, it seems like I've seen that before, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." The Jews missed that and they held onto this aspect of being of the physical

bloodline lineage of Abraham and the ritual primarily of circumcision is, if you will, the full aspect of being the covenant people of God.

Romans 2:29 reminds us, "But he is a Jew who is one inwardly." Now notice that, not the circumcision outwardly but inwardly. "And circumcision is that which is of the heart," he says here, "by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God." He says if you're a real Jew, now he doesn't mean of course in your genetics or in your nationality, he means a real child of God. The real child of God is not one who has had some external ritual performed on them, it's someone who has had a heart transformation. It's a heart circumcision by the power of God through his Son, Jesus Christ, and the application of the Spirit in your heart. He says there in Romans 2:29, "and his praise is not from men, but from God." Men may praise you if you dot the i's and cross the t's and jump through all the ceremonies and rituals of your religion but God may not praise you at all. God praises you in the sense that God affirms you and God sees you as one of his true ones when you've had the internal work of the Spirit in your heart, not the external work of ritual and legalism.

So he says here, back to our text in Ephesians 2, he says to the church at Ephesus, a Gentile church, "Remember they all called you the uncircumcision, you hadn't jumped through the hoops, you didn't have the ritual, you're not of the bloodline of Israel in Abraham. And they called themselves the circumcision. They were in, you were out." So the Gentiles were ceremonially because they just didn't have that ceremony, the Gentiles were excluded. That's what they had been taught. That's what they had heard.

Now look at the last part of verse 11 as we continue on, this insidious error that they had held to was the replacing of external religious activity for spiritual life. Wow, is that not a giant foundation stone of error in professing Christendom and in all religion today, the replacing with external religious activity for spiritual life. "Well, I did this. Well, I go to church. Well, I took communion. Well, I was baptized. Well, whatever, I took, whatever it is." So the Jewish error – are you listening – is not any more wrong or any more grievous to God than baptistic religion if you hold to that baptistic practice instead of having true spiritual life. It's the new birth in the heart that matters to God, not the ritual you performed.

In every generation, the enemy works incessantly to infuse this error into the church. Some have embraced the lie and built their entire structure upon it. We have the system of Roman Catholicism, not necessarily our Roman Catholic friends, some of them may know Christ, but the system. The Episcopalian system and others who would be sacramentalists and that is, they have grown to put most of their weight, if not all of their weight of emphasis on the external rite and the ritual and trust that that is enough and they haven't done the long, laborious, prayerful, Bible preaching work of making sure their children and their church members have true spiritual life. That's why Jesus looked at the religionists of his day at that particular point in John 3, Nicodemus, and said, "Nicodemus, you are," in effect, I'm amplifying, he says to Nicodemus, "you are terribly structured, disciplined, obedient, careful with all your religion but, Nicodemus, you must be born again." So physically these Ephesian Gentiles were uncircumcised but the Jews

who claimed their circumcision, unfortunately that's all they had. All they had was the mere religious ritual and it didn't make them a child of God and, by the way, he says their circumcision did not make them a child of God and your uncircumcision did not keep you from being a child of God. All that was was religious ritual and motions.

Outward circumcision does not and cannot change the heart of a man. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians and 1 Corinthians 7:19, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing." That's pretty clear, isn't it? "But what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God." In other words, has your heart been changed where you are beginning to treasure and love and embrace and see as all wise and important the truths of God's word? Has something happened in you that has changed your disposition? It has changed you from a woeful duty, an obligation, "Well, I've got to keep these things and try to make it to heaven," to, "No, I know God has accepted me by grace and now I desire to learn to keep his commandments. He is my loving Father and I want him pleased and honored. I fail often but that's what matters, a new heart that loves the commandments of God."

Philippians 3:3, Paul writes to the church at Philippi, "for we are the," what? "True circumcision." What does he mean? We "worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh." They say, "Yeah, but we did everything right. We brought our babies to the church. We had them circumcised on the eighth day. We keep the feast days. We never miss a sacrifice. On the great day of atonement, we keep the fasting. We keep the special days. We observe all the ceremonies, all the rituals, keep the commandments." Well, what does that mean? That means you are glorying and putting confidence in the flesh, not in Christ Jesus. You are actually the false circumcision and not the true circumcision. No wonder our forefathers in the first century starting with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, were martyred. You didn't look at a Jew and say, "You are the false circumcision." I mean, our President gets in hot water for just telling the news they are fake news. Paul and Jesus looked at the Jews and said, "You are fake Jews. You are fake Jews, you're not really the people of God at all." Oh, how this enraged them.

Colossians 2:11, "and in Him," that's Jesus, "you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands." Oh, there is a new kind of circumcision we need, that is, "in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." Christ is the spiritual surgeon who comes to you in conversion and he cuts out all the flesh tumor because that whole flesh aspect of your fallen nature is offensive to a holy and righteous God. And there is nothing you can do. Every ritual, every sacrament, every work, every ceremony you might possibly perform cannot remove the flesh tumor. Only Dr. Jesus has the capacity and the ability to cut all. Look, sometimes the doctor performs a surgery and he says, "I think we got all of it." So we say, "Well, I hope you did." But when Jesus performs his heart circumcision, he gets every cell of defiled offensive flesh cut out and from the moment you believed on Jesus Christ, you stand before Jesus as if you had never sinned and as if you will never sin again because in God's mind, the entire offensive flesh tumor has been taken away. What a Savior! What a Savior! What a Savior!

But this error that has insidiously, and I use insidious because the word insidious means to creep up and catch you. It just creeps in because they are creepy things. It sneaks in and it seems so right and it seems so good and my flesh so wants you to give me something I can perform to make me feel like, "Okay, I'm okay with God now. I want that. Let me do something. Let me take the sacrament, let me do the baptism, let me walk down to the front, let me fill out a card. Let me do something." Why don't you just go on back and get your baby circumcised on the eighth day after they are born? Let's just get it all if we're going to do it. It's all worthless if that's where your faith is.

I've told you many times, I know, but Charles Haddon Spurgeon would end his sermon sometimes by saying, "I know you would love for me to tell you something to do. Your flesh would love for me to tell you something to do but I'm leaving you abandoned to Christ, because if I give you something to do, you won't look at him, you'll look at what you just did and say, I did what the preacher said to do so now I'm okay." Do you know how many Baptists are going to be in hell because they did what the preacher or evangelist told them to do and they have never learned by faith to simply abandon their hope in faith in Jesus Christ? I know good men, good men who are trying to do good but they add it to stuff at the end of Gospel preaching that the Bible does not prescribe and at the end of it all, I'm fearful and afraid and I've been watching this for 40 years, that their efforts, anytime you add on extra, that their efforts are sending men to hell, not necessarily getting them into heaven. Because what matters is a new heart. What matters is being born again. What matters is spiritual life, not did you do the deal at the end of the preaching or the end of the testimony, whatever it may be.

So today so many have trusted the outward circumcision of a confirmation class. I remember when I went to the Methodist church a little bit as a small boy. They had a confirmation class and they asked me to go to the confirmation class. I cannot explain to this day why I wouldn't go but I just knew I wasn't going because I knew it wasn't real. I can't explain to you how I knew it wasn't real, I know it's the providence of God, first of all. I didn't want to go through a class and somebody declare me something. I mean, I'm 11 years old. But I just couldn't do it. And we weren't that faithful in church at that time anyway and didn't really go much past that at all, actually.

Some people trust a confirmation class. Some people trust the outward circumcision of baptism. Some trust the outward circumcision of church membership. Some trust the outward circumcision of going to the inquiry room. Some trust the outward circumcision of going to the mourners bench. Some trust the outward circumcision of saying, "I prayed the prayer." Some trust the outward circumcision of saying, "I walked to the front." Some trust the outward circumcision of saying, "Well, I took the pastor's hand." Some trust the outward circumcision of, "I raised my hand when the evangelist said to raise your hand." Some trust the outward circumcision of saying, "Well, I filled out the card."

I always thought that was so curious. I was just newly converted and hadn't been, really hadn't ever been in a Baptist Church and I remember seeing people come to the front and somebody would lean over to them and they would fill out a card and then they would be

presented. We had a college student, I mean we're talking 35 years ago here at Grace Life, First Baptist then, and he had been converted, wondrously converted, and he had a real straightforward kind of dry sense of humor and he would always talk about that blasted card. "That blasted card. I wanted to find Jesus and they gave me a card and told me, fill out the card, I'm coming today. Okay, you're going to be baptized and they just filled out the card." And our former pastor to his credit saw the error in that and began to lead our church out of that. We started taking time with people and I thank him for that. I appreciate that but we started giving people about seven minutes after they came down, and then we finally learned years later it may take more than seven minutes, it may take seven days, it may take seven months, it may take seven years. And we are not going to run any more people through the baptistery waters who do not look like a biblically described new creation in Christ Jesus. Christ's glory is too important and the precious souls of our children and our grandchildren and our spouses and our families are too valuable to make them a number and run them through some motions and brag about how many we have baptized. I would rather baptize 40 or 50 a year and have them five years later than 200 or 300 like we've been known to do many many years ago and can't find 98% of them two years later. That dishonors God. It's a disservice to the church and a disservice to the individual that you've just called saved when they are not.

So as I have told you before, don't think that old Jewish flesh is more wicked than modern Baptist flesh or modern Alabama flesh. We are all flesh and we are all prone to these errors. We just have to fight our way back out of them. But none of all of those things I listed are good evidences of saving faith. One who has true saving faith may have done some of those things and that's okay, but that's not the basis of their salvation. Those things do not save.

There must be the evidence of a changed heart, a new nature, a new birth, a regeneration. And here's why you've got to preach in context, look back up at verse 5 of chapter 2. Look at it, verse 5, chapter 2, "even when we were dead." Dr. Jimmy Milliken, my theological professor said, "How dead were you? Kind of dead? Mostly dead? Three fourths dead? 98% that? 20%? How dead were you? Last time I remembered, a dead man can't think, a dead man can't choose, a dead man can't decide, a dead man can't even repent." Dr. Milliken would say, "How dead were you?" And usually his glasses were like this because we would egg him on in class until he would start preaching his notes and we loved Dr. Milliken's class.

When we were, that means we were in the state of death. We are dead in transgressions. Then what happened? "Made us alive together with Christ." A supernatural, you can even use mystical experience happened that you can't explain, can't put under a microscope, you can't study it in a scientific formula. It's beyond, it's greater than all of that and that's why when the Master and all wise Jesus talked to Nicodemus he said, "Nicodemus, you must be born again." Nicodemus said, "Well, show me how that works." And he said, "Nicodemus, it's like the wind. You know how the wind is, you feel it and you don't know where it's coming from, you don't know where it's going next." He said, "That's what it's like when someone is born again. You can't figure it out." Our staff has been counseling with a dear man this past week or two who gives strong evidence he has been

wonderfully converted, wonderfully born again, and none of us would have predicted or thought it or figured it out. We're just waiting for the next one to pop up like a piece of popcorn. You just don't know who it is going to happen to next.

But if we mistake physical bodies, "Oh, look at our growth. Look at our numbers," if we mistake that for spiritual life, we become false circumcision. Like 2 Timothy 3:5, Paul warns young Timothy in his ministry, be aware, be careful of those who hold "to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power and avoid such men as these." They have learned how to put on religious practice and they look good but they have missed the true heart-changing power of the Spirit. It's just a form they put on. It's a false circumcision. It's a false conversion.

Well quickly, let's move on. Our time is running out. The second main point. Not just that the Gentiles were ceremonially excluded, that's the way they were viewed, Paul is saying, verse 12 and 13 shows us the all-sufficient saving power of Jesus Christ. "Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." You almost think the Ephesians were saying, "Well, Paul, are you trying to encourage us?" That is a terrible dismal picture. You were separate from Christ, you were without redemption, without access to God and you were under condemnation. You were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, excluded is a strong word, it means separated. They were the others according to the Jews who professed to be God's people. They were a totally separate class of people, unredeemable in many ways and viewed many times by the Jews. Maybe you are one of the others, maybe you grew up on the wrong side of the tracks, maybe you weren't the kind of kid or came from the kind of family the community looked on with favor. Well, that's the way the Gentiles were viewed by the Jews. The commonwealth of Israel. He said you are separate from that. You are separated from the community of God's people. You are aliens to the community of God's people.

Then he says, verse 12, you were "strangers to the covenants of promise." The Jews had many covenants instituted between themselves and God and they had primarily the wonderful and glorious promise of a Redeemer as their prophet told them in Isaiah 53. Acts 13:32, "And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers." He said, "Y'all weren't in the family, y'all weren't in the community that had those promises." That was given to Israel. The Gentiles had no interest in it.

You were "without God in this world," he says. Forsaken of God is what they meant. He had just left them in the world. God had manifested himself only to Israel. But, you know, God is the source of everything that's good and that includes hope. If we were without God, we were without everything despite all appearances to the contrary and he says you were without hope. You had no promise, no hope. And friend, if God hasn't promised something for you in the future, then you have no hope. I don't care what you think you have. The Stoic philosophers of this day among the Gentiles taught that history repeated itself every 3,000 years. At the end of each 3,000 year cycle the universe is burned up and everything just starts over again. It's just a no hope, fatalistic philosophy of

life. The gods of the ancient Greeks were sinful and weak gods. Their worship thrived on fear and desperation, not on trust and hope and he said, "You're without hope. You are all of those things."

Martin Lloyd Jones wrote, "The deeper a lost man thinks, the more pessimistic he becomes." The deeper a lost man thinks, the more pessimistic he becomes. Now, the frivolous, those who don't think about anything, they are not pessimistic because all they see is the glitter of life. They do not see the rottenness within. But those who think deeply, the philosophers or an artist or the poets or the writers, they seem to grow increasingly pessimistic because they don't have Christ, at least they do as they grow older. You all know the name Ernest Hemingway. Ernest Hemingway was one of America's greatest writers and there were things about Ernest Hemingway I liked. He was a man's man. He was a professional bull fighter, a professional soldier. He was a professional deep sea fishermen and big game hunter yet he lived a reckless and extravagant life. For his writing, he won the Nobel Prize in 1954, the Award of Merit from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1954, the Pulitzer Prize for his book "The Old Man and the Sea," but he had a childhood with a very difficult and strained relationship with his parents. His first wife left him for another woman and then he went through three other women. He suffered depression, addiction to alcohol. And if you want to know about Ernest Hemingway's pessimistic, fatalistic, depressed view of life, read "The Old Man and the Sea." It's depressing. Brilliant writing but the story is depressing. The old man in the twilight of his life finally catches the greatest catch of his entire life, something he has been after his whole life. He fights and rustles and battles and I believe days go by, storms are raging. He finally gets the great marlin to the boat. He straps it to the boat. He has achieved, I mean, in the twilight of his life, at the end of all of it he finally gets it. But on the way in, he is battling storms and the sharks begin to eat at the old giant trophy he's got and by the time he gets to the shore, it's all gone and devoured. He's got nothing to show for it and he's old and he just might as well die anyway. That's encouraging. That's what happens without Christ, you are without hope. Nine years after writing "The Old Man and the Sea," Ernest Hemingway takes a shotgun and blows his head off. I understand that he wrote in a note that when you can no longer enjoy the pleasures of women and whiskey, why live anyway. So being brilliant and talented doesn't mean much. You need wisdom. You need hope. You need Christ.

But all of this seemingly hopeless cord of verse 12, look at it again, "you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." All of that is now swallowed up by the triumphant strains of verse 13, "But now." "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Israel had everything near: they had the Scriptures, the prophets, the temple, the ceremonies. The Gentiles, they were far off. They were not even allowed in parts of the temple, but in Christ Jesus they zoom right past the temple into the very presence of a holy God through Christ Jesus. What an advancement they get in Christ Jesus. In Christ they are brought near. Acts 2:39 reminds us, "the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off." Now, I know some of you and you might be described as far

off but in Jesus Christ you can be brought near. "Far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."

He says in verse 13, he says, "you have been brought near." This is a phrase that the Jews would commonly use when they made a proselyte, making him nigh, they would say. We have won this one over to Judaism. We have brought him close to God. Well, God said, "No, when you make a convert," Jesus told him, "he's twice as much a child of hell as he was before." But through Jesus Christ, you may be far off but you are brought very near.

Then he says very specifically there, the last phrase of verse 13, you have been "brought near by the blood of Christ." Moses ratified the covenants by sprinkling the blood of calves and goats but Jesus actually brings us near by the shedding of his own precious blood.

Real quick, Hebrews 9. We're done. Look there with me. Hang in there. Stay alert. Listen to the meat of the word of God. Hebrews 9:19, "For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you.' And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood." You see, he is cleansing everything with this blood. "And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Verse 23, "Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." Better than calves and goats, that is. Verse 24, "For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but [He entered into] heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment," verse 28, "so Christ also, having been offered once." Moses, the priest had to go over and over and over, year after year. Christ goes once "to bear the sins of many," that's all of us, Jews and Gentiles, "will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him." So in the Old Testament economy, Moses or the priest would sprinkle the blood of some animal and the people were brought, in a sense, externally close to God, but we are brought spiritually to be one with God through the blood of Jesus Christ.

So he writes to a Gentile church and says, "You know what you've been taught, you know how you have been excluded from God according to Jews, well, they missed something very very very essential and foundational, they missed the fact that all men and any man anywhere can come near to God through Jesus Christ." And amen and amen because if that's not true, you don't have any hope. But it is true and you have full assurance of hope.