



SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD

SERIES: Ephesians

Friday, January 15, 2021

Scripture: Ephesians 2: 11-13

TITLE: Invited into God's Family

My wife has become very good at selling items online. With a recent move and growing boys, we're constantly parting ways with unnecessary things. But I remember when she started selling stuff on Facebook - she would get frustrated, because she couldn't get access to certain groups. I would ask her, "Why can't you get access?" She would say, "You have to be invited to join the group. You can't just join and post." She was excluded from the group and the privileges that come with it. She had to be invited.

This is a lot like how we were, before we were saved by Christ. Listen to the Apostle Paul's words, as we continue studying the book of Ephesians.

Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. ¹² In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. ¹³ But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. (Eph. 2:11-13, NLT)

Paul is a fascinating character. Paul was the master-of-religion. He had the game of religion figured out and mastered, but in a moment, he gave it all up. You see, Paul is addressing non-Jewish people here. Chances are, he'd be talking to you and me today. He makes an unusual statement about circumcision [in the English Standard Version of vs. 11], "which is made in the flesh by hands." Well, that's obvious, Paul. Circumcision is the removal of flesh by human hands. But his point is that any religious activity is simply works of the flesh. It has no saving/salvific power. The prayers of the Hindus are ineffective. The sacrifice of the Buddhists is futile. The sacrifice of the Jews is powerless/impotent for Salvation.

As former Back to the Bible teacher, Warren Wiersbe said, "Gentiles were without Christ, without heavenly citizenship, without covenants of God, without hope, and without God. That's a lot of disparity."

That is who we are apart from Christ. That is our status. We are without hope and without God. No promises. No Heavenly home. That's the majority of the world today. But not you. At least, I hope not you. You were once far off from God, but God through Christ brought you near. We were all outside the promises of God, outside of the Heavenly family. But God invited us in. Paul confirmed this in Ephesians 1. He said, "before the world began, God chose us to be His children." We could ask to be invited in. We could play the game of religion, but God has to invite us in. And because of this invitation, we can draw near to God.

Today, you may be feeling hopeless and alone. A new year produces new opportunities, but can also produce old pains and hurdles all over again. My challenge for you today is to remember, God invited you into His family and His presence. If you haven't said "yes" to this generous invitation, accept it today.

If you have, I challenge you to draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. He has provided you with hope, and peace, and an important place in a broken world. His arms are open wide, and He is ready to walk with you, each and every day.