

## Ephesians Chapter Two – Verses 11-15 continued

Let's read the verses...

Verse 11 – Pious Jews considered all non-Jews (Gentiles) ceremonially unclean. They thought of themselves as pure and clean because of their national heritage and religious ceremonies. Paul pointed out that Jews and Gentiles alike were unclean before God and needed to be cleansed by Christ. There are two groups in the church at Ephesus: Uncircumcised (the Gentiles) and the Circumcised (the Jews). In their previous condition, neither of these groups were right with God. Notice that the Jews had been circumcised *in the flesh* not *in their hearts*.

Jews and Gentiles alike could be guilty of spiritual pride—Jews for thinking their faith and traditions elevated them above everyone else and Gentiles for trusting in their achievements, power, or position. Spiritual pride blinds us to our own faults and magnifies the faults of others. Be careful not to become proud of your salvation.

**Question...what are some examples of Spiritual pride?**

Pride will kill you. Forever. Pride is the sin most likely to keep you from crying out for a Savior. Those who think they are well will not look for a doctor. As seriously dangerous as pride is, it's equally hard to spot. When it comes to diagnosing our hearts, those of us who have the disease of pride have a challenging time identifying our sickness. Pride infects our eyesight, causing us to view ourselves through a lens that colors and distorts reality. Pride will paint even our ugliness in sin as beautiful and commendable. Some examples of spiritual pride are...

### **1. Fault-Finding**

While pride causes us to filter out the evil we see in ourselves, it also causes us to filter out God's goodness in others. We sift them, letting *only* their faults fall into our perception of them.

When I'm sitting in a sermon or studying a passage, it's pride that prompts the terrible temptation to skip the Spirit's surgery on *my own heart* and instead draft a mental blog post or plan a potential conversation for the people who "*really* need to hear this."

## **2. A Harsh Spirit**

Those who have the sickness of pride in their hearts speak of others' sins with contempt, irritation, frustration, or judgment. Pride is crouching inside our belittling of the struggles of others. It's cowering in our jokes about the 'craziness' of our spouse. It may even be lurking in the prayers we throw upward for our friends that are — subtly or not — tainted with exasperated irritation.

## **3. Superficiality**

When pride lives in our hearts, we're far more concerned with others' perceptions of us than the reality of our hearts. We fight the sins that have an impact on how others view us, and make peace with the ones that no one sees. We have great success in the areas of holiness that have highly visible accountability, but little concern for the disciplines that happen in secret.

## **4. Defensiveness**

Those who stand in the strength of Christ's righteousness alone find a confident hiding place from the attacks of men and Satan alike. True humility is *not* knocked off balance and thrown into a defensive posture by challenge or rebuke, but instead continues in doing good, entrusting the soul to our faithful Creator.

## **5. Presumption Before God**

Humility approaches God with humble assurance in Christ Jesus. If either the "humble" or the "assurance" are missing in that equation, our hearts very well might be infected with pride. Some of us have no shortage of boldness before God, but if we're not careful, we can forget that he is God.

## **6. Desperation for Attention**

Pride is hungry for attention, respect, and worship in all its forms.

Maybe it sounds like shameless boasting about ourselves. Maybe it's being unable to say "no" to anyone because we need to be needed. Maybe it looks like obsessively thirsting for marriage — or fantasizing about a better marriage — because you're hungry to be adored. Maybe it looks like being haunted by your desire for the right

car or the right house or the right title at work: all because you seek the glory that comes from men, not God.

## 7. Neglecting Others

Pride prefers some people over others. It honors those who the world deems worthy of honor, giving more weight to their words, their wants, and their needs. There's a thrill that goes through me when people with "power" acknowledge me. We consciously or unconsciously pass over the weak, the inconvenient, and the unattractive, because they don't seem to offer us much.

Maybe more of us struggle with pride than we thought.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! ([Psalm 139:23-24](#))

Verse 12 The former condition of these Gentiles was totally reprehensible. They knew nothing about Christ. They had never had the advantage of being citizens of the commonwealth of Israel and were completely ignorant of the promises and covenants God had made with Abraham (Genesis 12:2,3). They were without God and had absolutely no hope of ever getting out of this world alive. The five-fold negative description of this verse has a cumulative effect. The situation grows worse and worse with the last clause, "and without God in the world," as the climax. Paul is letting the Gentiles know the state they were in before Christ rescued them.

Let's talk a little about the promises of Abraham...

Commonwealth in this verse refers to the civic, religious and commercial life of the people of God • Gentiles had no place in Jewish society • Therefore they could not benefit from the supernatural success God visited upon His people ° Over history and despite their persecution, there has never been a people more blessed than the Jewish people • Social studies have confirmed that Jews are overrepresented among the world's greatest scientists, musicians, artists, businessmen, politicians, etc. • Jews make up about 0.2% of the world's population, yet the percent of successful Jews in business, science and art is far higher ° And the accumulative contributions of the Jewish people to the world are truly astounding. (No wonder Sammy Davis Jr wanted to be a Jew)!

- Do you wear Levi jeans? You have a Jew to thank
- Do you use a Dell computer? You have a Jew to thank
- Did you like the movie ET? Or Jaws? You have a Jew to thank
- Do you like Hershey's chocolate? You have a Jew to thank

Some great Jewish names include Einstein, Freud, Carl Sagan, Edward Teller, Jonah Salk, Niels Bohr, Max Born, Steve Ballmer, Mark Zuckerberge Harrison Ford, Woody Allen, Daniel Radcliff, Gwyneth Paltrow, Dustin Hoffman, Billy Crystal, Oliver Stone, Leonard Nimoy, William Shatner, James Caan, George Gershwin, Billy Joel, Bob Dylan, Lauren Bacall, Ann Frank, Henry Kissinger and the list goes on. God keeps His promises to His people!

Verse 13 Paul says that Jesus opened the door for Gentiles to receive the promises given to Israel ° A New Covenant inaugurated in Christ's blood brought the Gentile "near. We're talking about the mystery of the Church • That God intended to form a community of Gentile believers who would follow the Jewish Messiah that Israel largely rejected • That God would bring the Gentiles near through Christ. This was always God's intent. Saving the Gentiles was not an afterthought of God. When Jesus came into this world to seek and save that which was lost, He said: "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:15,16).

Verse 14 Jesus Christ, as a result of shedding His blood, is not just the peacemaker, but is "our peace," because in His person, as God-man, the reconciliation took place. Through Him there is peace between God and man and Jew and Gentile. This double meaning runs through this verse and the one following. This latter peace, the one he mentions in this verse, is actually made possible by the first. **Who has made both one.** Both Jew and Gentile are one in their connection with Christ. If they truly belong to Christ, they are unified. This is the only way Jew and Gentile will ever be one. **And has broken down the middle wall of division between us.** The wall of division between these two groups was the Law of Moses, with its ordinances and observances (cf. Acts 10:28), which kept the Jews separate from the Gentiles, much like the actual wall of division in the Jerusalem Temple beyond which a Gentile was not permitted to go.

Verse 15 Through His death, Jesus Christ abolished the Law (Colossians 2:14). In other words, we are no longer under a system of perfect lawkeeping for justification, but under grace (Romans 6:14). **So as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.** The long feud between the human family is healed in Christ. There is now one fold and one shepherd. As Paul said in the Galatian letter: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:28,29).

In Christ, it doesn't matter about your ethnic identity, your gender, or your station in life. If you are in Christ, you are one of God's chosen people and you stand to [inherit all that God has promised](#). It is only *through Christ* that anyone can inherit God's kingdom ([John 14:6](#)). While there may still be ethnic, gender, and social distinctions that carry weight in other contexts, those distinctions do not affect one's standing as a child of God by faith in Christ.

Jesus intended there be unity in the church...

**Question...how can there be unity in the church between Jews and Gentiles when their beliefs are so different?**

Jesus reconciled Jew and Gentile tension by creating the church. Our position “in Christ” is the church **universal**. This is where the believer finds his or her true identity. We do not find our identity in face, race, or place. The word “making” in the Greek indicates that Jesus is still doing this. Our identity with Christ is the only source of peace that brings God together with men and men with each other.