**Living Theology Friends1430**

**Leon L. Combs, M.A., M.Div., Ph.D.**

September 28, 2014

**“Ephesians 2: 11-12”**

**Past issues of these letters may be read at** [**http://livingtheology.com/letters.htm**](http://livingtheology.com/letters.htm) **and I encourage you to catch up with them if you have not received earlier letters. Other writings of mine (48 articles and 30 commentaries) are at** [**http://LivingTheology.com**](http://LivingTheology.com) **and I pray they will be helpful. The author is solely responsible for the content of these letters and they do not represent any particular denomination.**

**Eph 2:11-12 “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-- 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.”**

There are two main obstacles between those outside of God and those who are part of His family. The first is the state of sin and Paul dealt with that in the first ten verses of this chapter. These two verses discuss the second obstacle and should make us Gentiles even more grateful to God for what He has done and is doing in us through Christ. The “therefore” actually refers back to verses 1-10 of chapter 2, which is all one sentence in the Greek text. In these previous verses Paul has pointed out how the unsaved were dead in their sins (Jew and Gentile alike) and how God by His power alone brought these spiritually dead people to life and raised them to heaven. In these two verses He is reminding the Gentiles “in the flesh” (meaning those physically born outside of the Jewish race) that before the fullness of time when Christ came and fulfilled His work, they were totally separated from the work of God. He calls the Jews the “so-called circumcision” because he is referring to the Jews who had an incorrect understanding of their state before God due to the circumcision by human hands. Paul specifies a circumcision performed by human hands, because true salvation comes by circumcision of the heart that can only be done by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:6).

Circumcision once set apart the people of God as a sign of God’s covenant with them through Abraham:

*Gen 17:10-11 “This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall 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.”*

*Rom 3:1-2 “Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.”*

The non-Jew had no history of the establishment of God’s kingdom or the promise of a Messiah. Gentiles were cut off from any of the advantages of the Jew because of their physical birth outside the Jewish race. Before the work of Jesus Christ, a person had to first convert to Judaism before there was any hope of salvation. There are two excellent examples of this in the Old Testament. One is the story of Ruth where we read: *But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.”* (Ruth 1:16) Notice that first she said that “your people shall be my people”, meaning that she would become a Jew. Then she stated that “your God, my God” for such was only possible if she were first a Jew. The second example is Naaman, a very powerful general who contracted leprosy. We read the account of his cure in 2 Kings 5:1-18. A captured Jewish girl told Naaman about Elisha who she thought could cure him of his leprosy. Naaman found Elisha who told him to bathe in the Jordan seven times and he would be cured. Naaman first thought this a ridiculous request, but he did it and he was cured. Knowing that the Jordan was not as clean as the rivers in his land and that simply bathing in a river would not cure his leprosy (surely he had bathed before!), Naaman recognized that healing came from the God that Elisha served: “*When he returned to the man of God with all his company, and came and stood before him, he said, “Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel; so please take a present from your servant now*.” (2 Kings 5:15) Naaman then took some soil from Israel so that he could worship God on the soil of Israel. He wanted to pray to God as a Jew on Jewish soil.

Before the work of Christ, the Gentiles were totally separated from the ordinances of God and were without hope unless they first became a Jew. Following the work of Christ, there is a new dispensation. Now there is the same hope to all people as the gospel does not differentiate between Jew and Gentile: “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*” (Rom 1:16) This huge change in the economics of God caused much confusion in the early church and why the word “all” was so awesome and unbelievable for a long time. This truth is confirmed in the following verses:

1Ti 2:4-6 *who desires all [both Jews and Gentiles] men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (5) For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (6) who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.*

# Titus 2:11 “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,”

Salvation is available to all people without their first having to convert to Judaism. This was a difficult concept for people after living with the old economy for so long. And now today, many people have trouble with that word “all” but for different reasons. Some think that God desires everybody ever born to be saved (universalism) and that Christ died for every person who ever lived (unlimited atonement). However, the word “all” simply means that the work of Christ saves people of every race and creed.

Praise God, salvation was performed on me, a Gentile.