

Once Gentiles
Ephesians 2:11-13
Halifax: 9 December 2007

Introduction:

Christians are a people who have been lavished with grace...

- The Lord has given us blessings in great abundance though we deserve only curses.
- How richly and fully this is declared to us in Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Already we have looked at chapter 1 where these blessings of grace are named:

- that we were chosen in Christ to be holy and without blame before God...
- that we are predestined to adoption as sons...
- that we have redemption through the blood of Christ, full forgiveness of sins...
- that we have an inheritance in God's house, where we will live in full communion with Him as our Father and Christ as our brother...
- that we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit who is already at work in us...

And after Paul names all these blessings,

- he then prays earnestly that the Lord would open the eyes of those who received them...
 - He wanted them to realise what their Lord had done so they would be filled with praise, gratitude, and joy...

And in chapter 2, we have seen how he goes on to magnify the riches of God's grace even more...

- by showing the kind of persons to whom it has been given!
 - Namely, to those who are dead in trespasses and sins—given over to corruption and wickedness and therefore justly under the wrath of God...
 - These are the ones on whom God has lavished this grace so that there are no grounds for boasting at all!
 - Clearly, we are saved by grace and all the glory goes to God.

And now as we move into Ephesians 2:11 and following,

- Paul continues to show the kind of persons on whom God lavished His grace...but from a different perspective...
 - Not only are they persons who were dead in their trespasses and sins...
 - They are also persons who were Gentiles in the flesh—far away from God and far from any expectation of His blessing.

Today I want to show you from Ephesians 2:11-13:

- What it means to be a Gentile...
- What the disadvantages of being Gentile are...
- And how you are called to remember that you were once Gentiles...

TRANS> So first,

I. What does Paul mean here when he says, “You were once Gentiles in the flesh.”?

A. The word he uses in the original is *eynh* which simply means “nations,”

- but he uses it in the way it is often used in the Bible...
- He uses it to refer to those who are outside the Covenant Community...
 - outside the people who are in covenant with God...
 - outside the church or assembly of God’s people...

1. You can see that he uses it this way...

a. First, because he says to the Ephesians (who were Greeks) “you were **once** Gentiles.”

- If they were “**once** Gentiles,” they are no longer Gentiles...
 - If Paul is referring to the fact that they are of Greek descent, that has not changed—they are still Gentiles in that way...
- But if he is referring to them as Gentiles in that they were not a part of God’s covenant people,
 - then it makes perfect sense to say that they were “once Gentiles” because now they are no longer Gentiles...
 - They have been brought into the fellowship of God’s people...
 - They who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

TRANS> Secondly, you can see that He calls them Gentiles in the sense of being outside the covenant community because:

b. he says that they were:

- “Gentiles **in the flesh who are called Uncircumcision.**”
- Physical circumcision was the sign that you belonged to the covenant community of God in the Old Testament...

- Under the Old Covenant, you could know that some one was not in the covenant by finding out if they were circumcised...
 - If they weren't, you knew for sure that they were not among the people of God.
2. Though circumcision is only an outward sign made with human hands, yet the absence of it pointed to the reality of their alienation from God.
- a. Until Jesus came, to be without sign of circumcision was to be outside the covenant community...
- and to be outside the covenant community was to be excluded from Christ.
 - You can see how Paul connects the two in verse 12...
 - “that at that time, you were without Christ.”
 - One goes with the other...
 - Just as surely as they were outside of the covenant people, they were outside of Christ...
 - to be cut off from God's people was to be cut off from God.
 - The rest of verse 12 bears this out.
- b. The implication here is that Christ was only to be found among the circumcised.
- If to be outside of them was to be without Christ, then obviously you had to be a part of them to have Christ...
- 1) But how did the circumcised people have before He had even come?
- They had Him promised—
 - He was promised and He was represented in the service of the temple...
 - When the priests offered up the animal sacrifices, it is was picture of what Christ would do—how He would be offered up for their sins.
 - They did not have Christ-given, but they did have Christ-promised,
 - And Christ-promised was sufficient to save them until He came.
 - It was by Him as promised that they had true communion with God and the hope of eternal life.
- 2) But it is important to be very clear about something...

- a) Do not suppose that because Israel had a monopoly on Christ promised that every circumcised Israelite had Him...
 - Not at all!
 - Many, even most of the Israelites did not truly have Him because they did not have true saving faith.

- b) Paul makes reference to this in verse 11 when he says that the ones who call the Ephesians “Uncircumcised” have only “the circumcision made in the flesh by hands.”
 - There was nothing wrong with the fact that circumcision was done by human hands—
 - it was supposed to be done in the flesh by human hands...
 - It was the sign that God had appointed...
 - But Paul’s point is that those who boasted in their physical circumcision and who called the Ephesians the “Uncircumcision” now that God had redeemed them,
 - were not truly circumcised in heart.
 - They were themselves circumcised in the flesh only and not in heart.
 - This was always a problem for many in Israel...
 - They had Christ promised, but they did not believe in Him.
 - They had their flesh circumcised, but their hearts and their lips and their ears were not circumcised.
 - They had the sign of God’s cleansing in their flesh, but they did not possess the cleansing.
 - This is why Jeremiah told them,
 - Jer 4:4: “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, And burn so that no one can quench *it*, Because of the evil of your doings.””

- c. So it is important to draw two conclusions from this...
 - 1) First, that the absence of the covenant sign of circumcision was indeed the proof of exclusion from Christ until He came...
 - 2) And secondly, that the possession of the covenant sign was not necessarily a proof that one truly had Christ...
 - many were physically circumcised who were not circumcised in heart.

- 3) There were three possibilities...
 - You were uncircumcised and therefore excluded from Christ...
 - You were circumcised and possessing Christ-promised...
 - You were circumcised and without Christ-promised (without faith).

- 4) And let me qualify one thing...
 - When I say that anyone who did not have the sign did not have the thing signified...
 - you must not understand that in some rigid mechanical way...
 - but as a general rule—as what is generally true.

 - Of course, there were those who were not yet circumcised because they were less than eight days old,
 - or because they were Israelite women,
 - or because they were new converts who had not yet been circumcised...
 - but as a general rule, to be without the sign was to be without Christ- promised—cut off from God.
 - It was an objective mark of inclusion.

B. It is important to see that the same principle applies to us in the New Testament.

1. In the New Testament, God also has a visible people, a covenant community, marked out from the rest of world by a covenant sign...
 - the sign of baptism...

 - And just as it was in the Old Testament,
 - there are those outside of this community and those who are inside...
 - those who are baptised and those who are not baptised.

 - And for those who are outside the visible church, there is, as our Confession puts it, “no ordinary possibility of salvation.”
 - Yes, there are those who have not yet been admitted to the church for various reasons, such as children who are not yet baptised or persons who have not yet had opportunity to be baptised...
 - but as a general rule, all those who are not baptised—all those who are outside the visible church—are cut off from Christ.
 - They have the objective sign in their flesh (or the absence of the sign) to show that they do not have Him—they are unbaptised.

2. And once again, it is also true that there are many who **are** baptised in the flesh, but who are not baptised with the Spirit...
 - They have the sign in their flesh, but they do not have the cleansing of their heart and lips and ears...
 - They do not have genuine faith.
 - They are baptised with the baptism of human hands,
 - but they have never been baptised by the Spirit of God.
3. So the main principle I want you to see is that those who are Gentiles—
 - those who are outside the covenant people—
 - are without Christ...
 - They are far away as long as they are outside the church that God has established.
 - These Ephesians to whom Paul writes were no longer Gentiles because they had become a part of the people of God in Christ...
 - They had been baptised, they had entered into the church...
 - Yet, their fellow citizens of Ephesus who did not believe were still Gentiles, excluded from God's people...
 - as were all the Jews who were not baptised.
 - Being unbaptised, they were now outside the visible church, excluded from Christ until they repent.

TRANS> Surely, it is a terrible thing to be outside the covenant people of God.

- Let us turn, then, to our second heading...

II. What are the disadvantages of being outside the covenant people?

- or, to put it in a positive light, what do you now have that you were once excluded from before you entered into covenant with God?
- These are listed out for us in verse 12.

A. First, to be outside of the covenant community is to be outside of Christ.

- We have already seen this...
- Paul tells the Ephesians that “at that time, you were without Christ”
 - at the time that they were Gentiles in the flesh, uncircumcised, not bearing the covenant sign in their bodies...they were excluded

1. The church is the community of God's people who are in covenant with Christ.
 - It is the body of Christ into which we are baptised together with our children as soon as we believe.
 - If you are not in the body, then you are not in Christ, for the church is Christ's body.
 - a. In the New Testament, the first thing an individual or a family did when they believed on the Lord Jesus was to be baptised.
 - They were baptised and added to the church.
 - Baptism is not some act of obedience that a person fulfilled at some later time...
 - It is the sign of the covenant that God has appointed for all those who believe, and it was always administered immediately.
 - It is the sign of entry by which we officially enter into the covenant.
 - Again, this is not to say that all who are baptised are saved,
 - nor is it to say that those such as the thief on the cross who had no opportunity to be baptised are damned...
 - But it is to say that ordinarily, those who are not baptised are excluded from Christ.
 - If a person refused to enter into the covenant, he is refusing Christ.
 - b. We live in a day when it is fashionable to say that church connection and baptism is irrelevant.
 - 1) This notion arose because there has been such a problem in the church with people assuming that they are right with God simply because they are baptised members of the church.
 - This is very wrong headed...
 - I have already shown that there are many who have the sign who do not have the thing signified.
 - 2) But this does not change the fact that to be excluded from the covenant community is to be excluded from Christ!
 - It is God's covenant people who possess Him, even though not all of them possess Him...
 - Just because some within the covenant community are hypocrites is no reason to say that the covenant community is not important!
 - Those who are outside do not have Him! They are without Christ!

2. And to have **Him** is to have everything!
 - a. It is to have the forgiveness of sins, because He was given as the Lamb of God to take away our sins...
 - Without Christ, we are yet under the wrath of God...
 - but in Him, we have full remission—we are made righteous through His obedient life and cursed death in our place.

TRANS> To have Him is not only to have forgiveness...

- b. It is also to have a new heart and a new life.
 - When we are united to Him by faith, He gives us His Spirit...
 - The Spirit cleanses away the corruption and defilement of sin in us and makes us sweetly compliant to God's law...
 - we delight in the law from the heart and begin to walk according to it...
 - we begin to love God with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves.

TRANS> Those outside the covenant community are at a great disadvantage because they do not have Christ.

- That is the first disadvantage, and the disadvantage that is foundational to all the others...
 - The second disadvantage for those outside the covenant community is...

B. that they are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel...

1. God set up a government for His people in the Old Testament...
 - a. He established them as a people with their own leaders: prophets, priests, and kings...
 - All of these represented the Lord and were sent by Him for the good of the covenant community...
 - The prophets were sent to declare the will of God to them...
 - The priests were there to present Christ-promised to them under the types and ceremonies of the temple that showed the forgiveness of sin through His blood...
 - The kings were given to enforce God's law and to defend the people from their enemies.
 - b. Although these leaders were often full of sin, God still used them...
 - 1) Without them, His people would not have been preserved...

- They would have completely lost their way and become just like the other nations.
- 2) Ultimately, Christ Himself was their prophet, priest and king,
- All of these represented Him and spoke by Him and were empowered by Him...
 - but if you were not among the covenant people (if you were a Gentile),
 - you were cut off from their ministry and so cut off from Christ.
2. In the same way, those who are outside the church in our day do not have the benefits of Christ's government which He has appointed for us...
- a. His government is different from what it was in the Old Testament...
- It is different because now we have Christ Himself as our prophet, priest, and King...
 - We no longer have these officers, but Christ has put the government of His church in the hands of ministers and elders.
 - By them, He receives and dismisses members, He ministers His word and sacraments, He carries out His oversight.
- b. And those who are cut off from this government are cut off from the only government that Christ has appointed...
- They are aliens from the commonwealth of the New Israel, those whose citizenship is in heaven and who are baptised in Jesus.
 - To be outside of the covenant community is to be without the government of Jesus Christ...

TRANS> The third disadvantage for those outside the covenant community is...

C. that they are strangers from the covenants of promise...

1. The covenants of promise refer to the various administrations and renewals of the one covenant of grace, all of which pointed to Christ in their own way...
- In Adam, He is the One who is the seed of the woman that will crush the serpent's head
 - In Noah, He is the one for whose sake the human race is preserved on earth...
 - In Abraham, He is the seed of Abraham in whom all the blessings sought by works at Babel will be given to the nations (a great name, unity, security, etc because of God's favour)
 - In Moses, He is the high priest Aaron who takes away the people's sin and the Prophet like Moses whose voice gives life to all whom He calls.

- In David, He is the son who will sit on the throne forever, perfectly obeying the father in all things, reigning until all His enemies are destroyed and until all of His people are obedient to God.
 - In Isaiah, He is the Servant who comes and satisfies the wrath of God for His people, and executes the judgement of His God.
 - In Jeremiah & Ezekiel, He is the new covenant (it is in His blood) by which there is forgiveness of sins and the promise of a new heart and a new life.
 - In Daniel He is the little stone made without hands that becomes a great mountain that fills the earth
 - In Malachi, he is the messenger of the covenant who purifies all the heretofore defiled sacrifices of His people so that they may make an offering in righteousness to their God.
 - In the ministry of John the Baptist, He is the Lamb of God who takes
2. In the New Covenant, the promises are the same, only now they are all fulfilled in the person of Christ!
- a. No longer are the people of the covenant waiting for the promise of Christ...
 - Now we are rejoicing in what He has done, and are the recipients of all His work—we are partakers of all His benefits.
 - b. But those who are outside the covenant people do not have these promises at all.
 - They only belong to those who are in Christ...
 - And those who are outside His body are not in Him—
 - they are strangers to the covenants of promise until they embrace them.

TRANS> The fourth disadvantage for those outside the covenant community is...

D. that they are without hope

1. This follows from being without the covenants of promise...
 - If you don't have the promises, you don't have hope...because hope is founded on the promises.
 - a. Some may have a subjective hope—
 - they may feel confident that things will work out okay in the end...
 - they may even believe that there will be some sort of heaven for them...
 - but this hope of theirs will perish—it is not grounded in truth...

- b. In other words, though they have a subjective hope, they have no objective hope...
 - They have nothing good coming to them in their future...
 - only trouble is going to come to all those who are not in covenant with God.
 - Even if they don't know it, their future holds a meeting with God that will land them in the place of outer darkness where they will be miserable forever and ever.

- 2. What a dismal, depressing thing it is to be without hope!
 - There can hardly be anything worse that could be said about you than to say that there is no hope for you!
 - One of the greatest comforts in any suffering is that it will someday pass...
 - but when you have no hope,
 - it means that things will only get worse for you...
 - you don't even have the hope that they will remain as they are!
 - The Bible says that you are without hope as long as you remain outside the covenant community...
 - And mark it down that even if you are baptised and are a member of the covenant people,
 - you are yet without hope until you truly repent of our sin and believe on the Lord Jesus.
 - Make sure that you are not without hope!

TRANS> The fifth disadvantage for those outside the covenant community is...

E. that they are without God

- 1. The great promise of God to the covenant community is that "I will be your God and you shall be my people."
 - That is what defines God's covenant people—they have Him as their God.
 - Of course there is a sense in which He is everyone's God—
 - for He made us, we are under His law, and He will judge us...
 - But this is talking about having Him as God who is for you rather than against you...
 - It is to have Him on your side...

- to have Him as your God to bless you forever instead of to be under His wrath and curse...
2. A lot of people don't believe that God is a God of wrath...
- But that is only wishful thinking...
 - In the Bible He reveals Himself as a God of wrath whose wrath is only removed by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
 - We are a sinful people, and God cannot respond to us in any other way than by judging us for our sins...
 - He must be against us as long as our sin remains.
 - But in His grace, He sent Jesus to take away our sin...
 - He sent Jesus to bear His wrath for us—to redirect His wrath that should have fallen on us upon Him.
 - When Jesus died on the cross, it was not just the physical sufferings that He endured...
 - He was the Lion of the Tribe Judah, and in anticipation of His sufferings, He agonised deeply because it was for Him to bear the wrath and curse of God.
 - But now that He has done it, all those who are in Christ have Him restored to them as their God.

TRANS> What a terrible thing it is to be outside of the people that God has redeemed, without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of God's people, strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world.

- But of course the whole point is that you have been brought out this miserable estate if you are in Christ.
 - As verse 13 says,
 - “But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”
 - Here is that wonderful transitional word “but” that we saw back in verse 4 after being told that we were dead in trespasses and sins—
 - “**But** God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses made us alive together with Christ...”
 - Well here it is again—
 - “**But** now, in Christ Jesus, you who were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ...”

- He came to us in our dark heathendom and rescued us from it by His grace!
 - He threw open the way to heaven for us by His death,
 - and it is He that brought us out of death and darkness to live forever.
 - We will have more to say about this next week...
- But I want you to see in our text that you are exhorted to remember where you came from!
 - This is the third thing I want to draw your attention to this morning...

III. You are to remember that you were once Gentiles! far off from God.

- You are to keep this before you, to never forget where you came from.
- A. This is a duty for **all** who are in God's covenant today.
1. This is how Paul begins this section in verse 11...
 - “Remember that you were once Gentiles in the flesh...”
 - Remember that you were those who were without Christ and who had no hope...
 - Remember that you were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel...
 - Remember that you were strangers to the covenants of promise...
 - Remember that you had not hope and were without God in the world...
 - Remember, remember, remember!
 2. This applies to all of you—you are to remember that you were once Gentiles.
 - a. But some of you will say,
 - “yes, but I born in a Christian home—I was baptised as a child and have remained in covenant with God from the beginning...
 - God has blessed me with the light of His covenant from my earliest days...
 - I have not always been faithful,
 - but as far back as I can remember, I have trusted in Him alone for my salvation.
 - My words I have been those of Peter, “Lord where else can we go, you have the words of eternal life.”

- I know and I believe that but for the grace of God, I would be dead in trespasses and sins, but how can I remember that I was once a Gentile?
- b. Some of the Ephesians to whom Paul writes would have been like that also...
- Latter on, he addresses the children who were among those to whom he wrote...
 - Some of them would have had the privilege of growing up in the covenant...
 - How were they to remember that they were once Gentiles who were destitute of God's blessing?

TRANS> Well think about it—how did this apply to them? How does it apply to you?

3. Brothers and sisters, if you were baptised as a child, you have this blessing because God placed you into a home with parents who are Christians—
- but you are to know that somewhere down the line your forefathers were Gentiles—
 - that is, they were outside the covenant people of God...
 - The Ephesian children only had to look back one generation to see when their forefathers were rescued...
 - and how thankful they were to be...
- a. You may have to look back even farther...
- In Ezekiel the prophet, the Lord exhorted Israel to remember that they had been brought out of idolatry hundreds of years before...
 - They were to be humbled by remembering that they were once Gentiles.
 - Listen to Ezekiel 16:
 - Ez. 16:1-6: Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: "Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born. And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' Yes, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!'"

- Even if you are Jew, you only have to go back far enough to remember that you were once Gentiles...
- b. In Romans 11, the Lord warns those Gentiles who have recently been converted not to boast...
 - They are always to remember that it is by grace they have been saved...
 - Even after a thousand generations, we are to always look back and remember that we were once Gentiles...far off from God... condemned and cut off.
 - and that we are near only because we were brought near by the blood of Christ...
 - It is only because His blood was shed for us that we are in covenant with Him now.

TRANS> Why are we to remember this?

- B. It is very beneficial to remember that you were once far off.
- Here are five reasons why it is good to remember...many more could be given, but here are five...
 1. First, it is good to remember because it humbles you
 - (and you need to be humbled).
 - a. When you have all this grace poured on you, it is all too easy to start to think that you somehow deserve it!
 - This is one of the most destructive things that can happen to covenant people—and it often does happen...
 - They are in Christ structurally, and they grow cold and die!
 - You need to remember that you did not always have these blessings...
 - That many of your ancestors before you died as Gentiles, cut off from God's grace.
 - b. This fact, that your ancestors and many other people in the world today were cut off from these blessings—and some of them never even had an opportunity to believe—they never even heard the gospel at all...
 - That fact, I say, forces you to either charge God with injustice (which you dare not do!) or to drop any notion that God was in any way obligated to bring the gospel to your family!
 - The fact that people are going to Hell today,
 - just like your own ancestors did who died without Christ,

- and that these never even heard of Christ...
- that fact forces you to accept the fact that neither you nor they deserved to hear...
- You and your fathers deserved only what God says you deserve—condemnation in the Lake of Fire.
 - And God might very well have continued to leave your family there... even as He has left others.
 - You need to remember that you were once Gentiles so that you might not think you now deserve to be brought near.

TRANS> So you in the first place that remembering where you came from helps you to be humble...

2. Secondly, remembering that you were once cut off enables you to accept the justice of God...
 - a. The reality that people your ancestors really were cut off and that many of them really did go to Hell forces you to see that this is what God's holy justice requires...
 - His justice is dreadful toward us sinners, but beautiful and glorious!
 - He is a God who loves what is right and true, and that is why heaven will be such a wonderful place!
 - Injustice cannot remain in His presence!
 - Only what is pure and holy and good!
 - b. I tell you, it is a very sad thing that today many people who read this passage in Ephesians 2 have very wicked sentiments...
 - When they read that the Gentiles, who were cut off, are now made near by the blood of Christ,
 - their thought is that there was a grave injustice that has now been put right...
 - That for all those years God did not deal fairly with the Gentiles because they were cut off and only the Jews were included...
 - but that now, things have been put right!
 - That is so wrong headed!
 - It is not that things have been put right,
 - It is that the LORD has done a marvellous work of grace in saving us when we in no way deserved it...
 - As sinners, it would have been perfectly just if He had cast us all into the Lake of fire,

- He did that to our ancestors who were outside of Christ,
- and there was no injustice in it.
- It is not because of justice, but mercy that we are saved.

TRANS> So you see that remembering that you were once Gentiles forces you to accept God's justice in excluding your own ancestors for however long He did.

3. Thirdly, remembering that you were once Gentiles presses upon you the urgency of missions

a. When you realise that all those who are yet Gentiles are completely excluded from God's mercy,

- it ought to stir up your compassion for them!
- The Lord calls us to carry His gospel to all the nations—to command all men everywhere to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus.

b. Sadly, there are some professing Christians who believe that if those outside the covenant do the best they can with the light they have, they will be saved!

- This is a very grave error, for it presupposes that the reason people are saved is because they are sincere or do the best they can.
- Absolutely not!
 - The Apostle says, “you were brought near by the blood of Christ!”
 - Jesus says that those who are elect will hear His voice and will come to Him—they will hear the gospel!
 - If people do not hear, it is clear indication that they are not elect.
 - Our text makes it clear that those who have not yet heard the gospel are necessarily excluded from God's redemptive blessings.
 - Wishful thinking cannot write their names or the names of their children in the book of Life...
 - If they are to be saved, the Lord will send His gospel to them and they will believe...
 - That is the way He saves people.

c. When you see that they are entirely lost, while you, though once Gentiles, have been rescued,

- It puts an obligation upon you toward them.
- The Apostle Paul described himself as a debtor to all men because he realised that he had received grace that others had not received...
 - He knew that he did not deserve it any more than they did...

- Therefore, he felt obligated to go to them and urge them to turn to Christ... to pray for them and to do all he could to persuade them.

TRANS> Remembering that you were once gentiles helps you to have compassion for those who are yet Gentiles...

4. Fourthly, remembering that you were once Gentiles affects the way you deal with your children... and with all others who are in the covenant...

a. Oh Christian parent!

- Shame on you if your children grow up taking their privileges in this covenant for granted!
 - It is not just their fault—it is also your fault if that happens.
 - God forbid that you act as if the grace of God is no great thing!
 - Woe to you and to your little ones if you give them the impression that you deserve to be God’s people.

b. And when you see other Christians, baptised people, blindly going along with traditions, cold and unbelieving...

- Deal with them!
 - Tell them of the blessings we have in Christ in this covenant!
 - Tell them what God has promised to us!
 - Urge them to believe—not to sit in the midst of these precious covenant blessings in unbelief!
 - Remind them that God destroyed many of the Israelites who do not believe, though they were in the covenant...
 - And that our Lord has told us that there will be many who will stand before Him on the last day to whom He will say the dreadful words,
 - “Depart from me, for I never knew you!”
 - There are thousands who go to church, who have been baptised, to whom this will be spoken.

c. Oh brothers and sisters,

- Let me warn each of you with the words of Hebrews 3:12:
 - Heb 3:12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;
- You may be brethren as those who are in the covenant...
 - But it will not go well with you if you have covenant privileges without covenant faith and life!

- It is far worse for you to be baptised and believe not than if you had never been baptised at all!
- I urge you, remember where you came from so that you will not lose sight of the privileges as privileges—
 - and so that you will be able to remind your children and all others who are in the covenant community how privileged they are!

TRANS> Remembering where you came from will help you to remind others in the covenant where they came from...

5. Fifthly, remember that you were once Gentiles in order that you might have true gratitude.
 - This is the main point...
 - a. Knowing that you were once cut off from this covenant, and justly so,
 - but that now in Christ Jesus you have been brought near to God by the blood of Christ cannot but fill you with gratitude...
 - Just to think that even though you and your ancestors fully deserved to burn in Hell forever,
 - Jesus, at God's command, experienced the pains of Hell in your place!
 - b. How can this not turn your whole life into an offering of thanksgiving to God?
 - Meditate deeply on what God brought you out of and you will be grateful!
 - It cannot be otherwise.
 - How thankful we should be that God we who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.