

**Captive through Philosophy vs. Complete in Christ  
Col 2:8-15 (Part 6)**

**I. Introduction**

**A. If you ask most what the *LARGEST CANYON in the WORLD* is**

1. Most will answer: the Grand Canyon
2. Grand Canyon
  - a) reaches a depth of 8800 feet (>1.5 miles)
  - b) has a length of 264 miles
  - c) But that's not the largest canyon in the world! That honor goes to:
3. Great Canyon of Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) River in Himalayas (Tibet).
  - a) Its depth =17,657 ft (> 3 miles!)
  - b) length of 298 miles (34 miles longer than Grand Canyon of the Colorado River!)

**B. When I was studying *Joshua 1 and the Israelites journey to the Promised land, I studied the Geology of the Mid-east area around Israel***

1. Running right down the middle of this region is a geological rift, called El Ghor by the Arabs,
2. = deepest geological fault on the surface of the earth. .
  - a) Starts in the Mountains of Lebanon at the North
  - b) Includes the Sea of Galilee (696 ft below sea level)
  - c) Includes the Jordan River and the Dead Sea 60 miles to the South (1296 ft below sea level)
  - d) Goes all the way to the Rift Vally in CENTRAL AFRICA!
  - e) Reaches depths of a HALF MILE BELOW SEA LEVEL!
  - f) On a MAP – BIG TEAR down the mid-east into Africa!
  - g) Bet you didn't know that about Israel!

**C. Canyons like these are immense, impassable or at best very difficult to cross, and**

1. They generate fear, awe, respect.
2. Saw TV show other night of people laying on their stomachs barely peering over the edge of a canyon
  - a) Mary Ann and I both said – that's us!

**D. Why talk about Canyons, Rifts?**

1. Today we're going to see Paul complete his description of the GREATEST canyon / rift /chasm that has EVER EXISTED
2. DOES SO for a VERY SPECIFIC REASON!
3. That CANYON is the SEPARATION between the UNSAVED GENTILE (=us) and GOD
4. That CANYON has been SPANNED / BRIDGED by what Jesus Christ did on the cross!
  - a) His work on the Cross CROSSED that CANYON!
5. But I said Paul had a very specific reason for DESCRIBING this CANYON!
  - a) Paul wants us to REMEMBER how BIG and GREAT that CANYON IS

- b) PEER into that CANYON and REMEMBER HOW VAST the SEPARATION BETWEEN US AND GOD WAS -WHY?
- 6. If you UNDERSTAND how GREAT the CANYON is then you'll UNDERSTAND HOW GREAT the CROSS is
  - a) You'll FULLY APPRECIATE how MUCH CHRIST has DONE for YOU!

**E. We are in Colossians 2 GIVING the CONTEXT to 2:13-14**

- 1. Last week: The PROBLEM between Jew & Gentile Historically
- 2. This week: The GENTILE PREDICAMENT!
  - a) The FACTS of SEPARATENESS from CHRIST (Eph 2:11-13a)
    - (1) Socially Separated
    - (2) Spiritually Separated
      - (a) Separated from Christ
      - (b) Excluded
      - (c) Strangers
      - (d) No Hope
      - (e) Without God in the World

**F. SO – Let's SEE JUST HOW BIG A CANYON the CROSS of CHRIST SPANS!**

**II. Socially Separated**

[Ephesians 2:11](#) 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.

**A. Notice: Paul repeats "remember that" in v.12**

- 1. What is he doing here?
- 2. = Interjecting a COMMENT before he LISTS THE SPIRITUAL SEPARATION the Gentiles faced BEFORE CHRIST.

**B. What is he saying?**

- 1. First – "WE ALL KNOW that there is a PROBLEM BETWEEN the JEWS & GENTILES!"
- 2. Second – THAT PROBLEM has TWO SIDES!
  - a) You BOTH have a PROBLEM!
  - b) JEWS had a PROBLEM in the WAY THEY TREATED YOU (i.e. calling you "uncircumcised")
  - c) BUT – even though they were WRONG in their behavior, THERE WAS A REAL UNDERLYING PROBLEM!

**C. IOW**

- 1. Jews were right – UN-CIRCUMCISION = PROBLEM with relationship with God
  - a) Past – had to become a Jew to get to God.
- 2. BUT Jews were WRONG because THEIR CIRCUMCISION was not WHAT THEY THOUGHT IT WAS – NOT = SALVATION!

#### **D. Therefore remember that formerly**

1. "Therefore" = "On which account"
  - a) Looks back to all of v.1-10
  - b) = what follows is drawn from the past 10 verses
  - c) V.1-10 HAD to HAPPEN in order for v.11-22 to happen
2. "remember"
  - a) = "call to mind"
  - b) = I want to ONCE AGAIN DRAW ATTENTION to God's GRACE towards you
  - c) DRAW you to REMEMBER / PONDER / REFLECT on / CONSIDER – HOW MUCH CHRIST did for you!
  - d) Paul is about to say that the JEWS had A PRIDE problem BECAUSE of WHAT GOD did for them
    - (1) So – TELLS Gentiles – DON'T GO THERE
    - (2) Exercise of CONTINUALLY REMEMBERING will KEEP YOU HUMBLE
    - (3) You were dead – CHRIST DID IT ALL
    - (4) Even the FAITH you have IS A GIFT
    - (5) NOW let me tell you HOW FAR God had to REACH to bring you into the FAMILY!
    - (6) We've got enough problems with Jewish PRIDE, Let's not have GENTILE PRIDE!
3. "that formerly" = IN THE PAST = BEFORE CROSS

#### **E. the Gentiles in the flesh**

1. "Gentiles" = PHYSICALLY speaking you were Gentiles
2. "in the flesh" = NOT PHYSICALLY CIRCUMCISED
3. With "in the flesh" PAUL ALSO begins a play-on-words that he WILL use AGAINST the Jews in a moment

#### **F. who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision,"**

1. who are "Uncircumcision" = Term of Mockery
  - a) Jews took a SPIRITUAL SYMBOL (circumcision) and made it a form of mockery
  - b) Most name calling is slang – here it was using a reality to be MEAN
  - c) Paul is DIRECTLY DEALING with the PROBLEM between JEW & GENTILE
    - (1) This name-calling was all that was needed to RECALL THE EXTREME DIVISION between them
    - (2) In a couple of verses he will SPEAK of their UNITY in the BODY of CHRIST!
2. by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands—
  - a) "so-called 'circumcision'"
    - (1) Here's where you can see that Paul is ADDRESSING a NON-SPIRITUAL ISSUE
    - (2) = SOCIAL, SIN ISSUE on the part of the JEWS
    - (3) "so-called" = THEY ONLY THOUGHT they WERE circumcised SPIRITUALLY

## (4) REAL circumcision IS OF THE HEART

[Romans 2:28](#) For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. [29](#) But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

(a) Real Jew is INWARD

(5) Why were they only SO-CALLED?

b) which is performed in the flesh by human hands—

(1) They were only circumcised PHYSICALLY (outwardly) and NOT INWARDLY

(2) The Jews believed in SALVATION by SURGERY!

(3) We're SAVED JUST BECAUSE we're JEWS and we've got the CIRCUMCISION to prove it!

(4) Paul – BUT their HEARTS WEREN'T CHANGED – they weren't SPIRITUALLY CIRCUMCISED!

(5) To the Philippians:

[Philippians 3:3](#) for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,

(a) INWARD, NOT OUTWARD!

### III. Spiritually Separated (Eph 2:12)

[Ephesians 2:12](#) *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.

#### A. remember that you were at that time

1. Paul repeats phrase at beginning of v.11
2. Sets the context –
  - a) PRIOR to the CROSS
  - b) PRIOR to LIFE of JESUS
  - c) = OT time period
3. Paul now DETAILS OUT the GENTILE SEPARATION / ALIENATION
  - a) All INTER-RELATED / Many overlaps!
  - b) Yet all DETAILED SPECIFICS of what the GENTILES didn't have!

#### B. *Without Christ: Separate from Christ*

1. REMEMBER – this is HUGE Contrast to “in Christ” in this letter – everywhere!
2. = “Let me show you how far away you WERE so that you have the greatest appreciation for WHERE you ARE!”
3. They were “without Christ” = WITHOUT MESSIAH!
  - a) = NO Messianic hope/ MESSIAH to look forward to
4. Note –
  - a) Paul is referring to the Old Testament economy

- b) Yet he refers to this time as “without Christ” WITHOUT MESSIAH!
- c) What is going on here?
- d) A: The THEME of the OT is the SAME as the THEME of the NT! = CHRIST!
- e) EVERYTHING in OT POINTED forward to the CROSS!
- f) Everything was PREPARATION fo the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ

[Galatians 3:23](#) But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

- (1) = What was the OT Law?
- (2) = TUTOR to BRING US TO CHRIST!

[Galatians 3:24](#) Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.* [25](#) But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

- g) No Animal sacrifice EVER SAVED anyone – ONLY FAITH in the PROMISE of a COMING MESSIAH
- (1) Who WOULD DIE for SIN!

5. God’s plan of SALVATION has NEVER CHANGED!

- a) GREAT COMMISSION is the SAME
- b) Answer HAS ALWAYS BEEN “CHRIST”
- c) OT did not know it would be Jesus of Nazareth, but He would be the MESSIAH!
- d) Acts 4:12 is right – [there’s no salvation under any other name!](#)
- e) Ever read the verse before 4:12?

[Acts 4:11](#) “He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, *but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone.*”

[Acts 4:12](#) “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

- (1) Peter quotes Ps 118:22
- (2) OT Prophecy LOOKING FORWARD to the coming of the CHRIST!

6. BUT – the Gentile was OUTSIDE God’s Way of SALVATION and DIDN’T even KNOW there was a Messiah!

- a) Remember what the Ephesians did have?
  - (1) Ephesus: Famous for Temple of Artemis (= Diana – Roman name)
    - (a) One of the SEVEN WONDERS of the ANCIENT WORLD!
    - (b) Artemis = twin sister of Apollo / Daughter of Zeus!
      - (i) Moon Goddess / Goddess of Hunting
      - (ii) Strange woman figure with whole front covered with breasts (like she had front covering of oranges!)
    - (c) Temple huge
      - (i) 127 columns – each 197 ft high!
      - (ii) Had statue of her that people believe came directly from Zeus (Acts

19:35)

- (2) Ephesus had a great system of organized idolatry,
- (3) They had Artemis BUT not CHRIST!
- b) And – of WHAT VALUE was ARTEMIS? NONE!
- c) Of what VALUE is HAVING CHRIST?
  - (1) = ETERNAL VALUE
  - (2) = spared from ETERNAL WRATH of GOD IN HELL
  - (3) Turn to Eph 1 to see all we are given!
    - (a) V.3 EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING in Christ!
    - (b) V.4-6
      - (i) Chosen to be HOLY and BLAMELESS
      - (ii) Predestined to ADOPTION as SONS!
    - (c) V.7 REDEMPTION / Forgiveness of SINS= Christ BOUGHT US BACK OUT OF the SLAVE Market of Sin = REDEEMED US!
    - (d) V.9-10 INSIDERS to the WILL of God
      - (i) Part of HIS GREAT PURPOSE to bring all things under Christ!
    - (e) V.11 God's INHERITANCE which He gives US as LOVE GIFTS to HIS SON!
  - (4) GIVEN everything that God is GIVING HIS SON – “joint Heirs”
  - (5) An inheritance that Peter described as

[1 Peter 1:4...imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.](#)

- (a) And – YOU'RE PROTECTED by GOD to ensure you get it!

- 7. So – to FIRST appreciate HOW FAR GOD has brought US! - REMEMBER
  - a) THEY WERE without CHRIST and the work He did on the CROSS to save them!

**C. Without Nation: Excluded from the commonwealth of Israel**

- 1. Remember: Israel was a “theocracy”
  - a) God and Country were the SAME
  - b) As their GOD and LORD / KING He gave ISRAEL...
    - (1) His special blessing
    - (2) protection
    - (3) love
    - (4) covenants,
    - (5) His law
    - (6) His priesthood
    - (7) His sacrifices
    - (8) His promises
    - (9) His guidance

- c) Psalmist: God “has not dealt thus with any nation;...”
- 2. Therefore EXCLUDED from all the GOODNESS of GOD towards ISRAEL
- 3. NOT citizens BUT were ALIENS & STRANGERS
- 4. Remember ALL that God did for ISRAEL
  - a) The PROMISE of MESSIAH
  - b) The PROMISE of the LAND
    - (1) He was their COMMANDER in CHIEF and gave them the land of Canaan
  - c) Their PROTECTOR from other nations
  - d) Their BLESSOR
  - e) Granted – they forfeited much blessing because they disobeyed BUT God was ALWAYS faithful
- 5. Paul to the Gentiles – YOU HAD NONE of this!
  - a) You were not God’s OBJECT of blessing, concern, promise, protection, etc.!
- 6. TODAY = OUTSIDE the CHURCH of Jesus Christ!
  - a) No FELLOWSHIP of the SAINTS
  - b) No WORSHIP
  - c) No COMMON, ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY
  - d) Think of HOW the CHURCH is the CENTER of YOUR LIFE!
    - (1) Rather be with a Christian ANY DAY
    - (2) Rather be with your FAMILY – the Church
    - (3) You’re known here
      - (a) Loved here
      - (b) Fed / cared for here
    - (4) Part of the HOUSEHOLD of GOD!
  - e) AND – you won’t BE RAPTURED with the CHURCH
    - (1) You won’t have the marriage supper of the LAMB
    - (2) You won’t be presented to God the Father in the full glory of the Church!
  - f) BEFORE CHRIST you had NONE of THIS!
- 7. So – how wide is the CANYON here?
  - a) INFINITE and ETERNAL!
  - b) OUTSIDE the FAMILY / HOUSEHOLD of GOD vs. FULL SON with FULL JOINT HEIR inheritance with CHRIST!

**D. Without Covenant: Strangers to the covenants of promise**

- 1. Very Closely related to the previous one
- 2. = Strangers to the Abrahamic Promise and it’s related covenants.
- 3. You Didn’t have ANY of the COVENANTED PROMISES of GOD!
- 4. How does this DIFFER from being without NATION?
  - a) Remember – the COVENANTS (Abrahamic) were GREATER than ISRAEL
  - b) i.e NOT JUST for the NATION ISRAEL!
  - c) Israel = CONDUIT for the Abrahamic Covenant in OT

- d) BUT was not the SOLE BENEFICIARY of it!
  - e) That is why Paul is careful to call them only “[strangers](#)” because this position was SELF-CHOSEN!
5. “[strangers](#)”= didn’t even know PROMISES of GOD existed!
- a) The JEWS were Receiving all kinds of information about what God was promising those who followed in the FAITH of Abraham!
6. Example – our cat – Jackie
- a) Was a neighborhood cat neglected by her owners in LA that hung out around our house. = Gentile
  - b) Jackie saw the life we had in the house = Israel under the rule of God
  - c) All she knew was the we had something she wanted
    - (1) She was “without”
  - d) ONCE she became part of the family – she now KNOWS DAILY the PROMISES of here CARE, PROTECTION, LOVE, etc.
  - e) SHE BASKS in her LIFE of LUXURY!
  - f) For the Gentile – the contrast was the same!
    - (1) They didn’t know ANYTHING of what they were missing when on the outside RELATIVE to GOD!
    - (2) They could see the warmth of the house, BUT they didn’t know that there was SO MUCH more once they became part of the NATION and were WITH CHRIST
    - (3) Then THEY GOT ALL the PROMISES TOO!
7. How about us?
- [2 Corinthians 1:19](#) For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. 20 For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.
- a) JM: All God’s OT and NT promises of peace, joy, love, goodness, forgiveness, salvation, sanctification, fellowship, hope, glorification, and heaven are made possible and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
8. BEFORE CHRIST YOU HAD NONE OF THIS!
- a) You had ONLY ONE PROMISE – HELL if you didn’t REPENT and turn to God on His TERMS!
9. How wide is the canyon here?
- a) INFINITE
  - b) NO PROMISES of ANYTHING GOOD for NOW and ETERNITY
  - c) to “as many are the promises of God, IN CHRIST they are YES!”
10. WELL – it Follows that if you didn’t have CHRIST, didn’t belong to the NATION of ISRAEL and had no COVENANTED promises of GOD . THEN you were...

**E. Without Hope: [Having no hope](#)**

- 1. = NO FUTURE of anything good!

2. Remember what biblical hope is!
  - a) NOT a wish, desire “I hope I make it to heaven”
  - b) IS a CERTAINTY based on FAITHFULNESS of GOD
  - c) FAITH looks BACK at what God has ALREADY done
  - d) HOPE looks forward, based on FAITH to what God has promised to do!
  - e) = CERTAINTY when speaking of GOD!
3. Peter calls our Salvation a “living hope!” (1 Peter 1:3)
4. For the Unsaved – THIS WORLD is THE BEST IT GETS!
  - a) We know this WORLD is A NASTY PLACE compared to the HOPE we HAVE
  - b) INFINITE DIFFERENCE!
5. How WIDE is the CANYON here?
  - a) INFINITE
  - b) HELL to HEAVEN in ETERNITY
  - c) No hope to COMPLETE CERTAINTY on this side of ETERNITY!

**F. Without God: Without God in the World**

1. Sums it all up CORPORATELY and ADDS a SUBJECTIVE ELEMENT
  - a) They didn’t know GOD PERSONALLY
  - b) DIDN’T EXPERIENCE GOD in life.
2. Look at David in the Psalms
  - a) When Life was falling apart around Him
  - b) HE HAD GOD!
  - c) Circumstances didn’t change, BUT
  - d) He knew the sovereignty of God
  - e) He had a proper world view that explained everything in it’s proper manner
  - f) He would set his mind on things above and end up praising God when the psalm started out crying out to God!
  - g) That’s the experience of God in life that they didn’t have.
3. Looking at everything from an OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE!
4. BUT Paul turns the corner
  - a) I’ve just told you HOW DEEP and WIDE the CANYON is between God and You!
  - b) NOW let me tell you how BIG the CROSS of CHRIST is TO YOU!
  - c) This is WHY the RESURRECTION is the MOST IMPORTANT EVENT in the HISTORY of the WORLD!
  - d) CHRIST’S CROSS SPANS/ BRIDGES the INFINITE CANYON between God and you!

**IV. Conclusion: The FACTS of UNITY in CHRIST (2:13-22)**

[Ephesians 2:13](#) But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

**A. One of the GREAT “BUT’S of SCRIPTURE**

**B. NOW = what you have as a Christian**

**C. "in Christ Jesus" = WHAT you ONLY HAVE THROUGH / IN / BY CHRIST**

**D. you who formerly were far off have been brought near**

1. Old Testament metaphor
  - a) Paul SUMMARIZES the WHOLE list of things we just talked about!
  - b) This pictured Israel as Physically CLOSE to GOD as they lived NEAR and AROUND the TEMPLE
  - c) WHILE the GENTILES lived "far off" = BEYOND the BORDERS of the NATION of ISRAEL
  - d) Physical REALITY became a SPIRITUAL designation
2. POINT: YOU ARE NOW "NEAR"
  - a) ALL of those POINTS of SEPARATION ARE GONE
  - b) You have ACCESS to GOD
  - c) He is YOUR GOD, Your FATHER
  - d) You are HIS CHILDREN, JOINT HEIRS
  - e) YOU ARE WITH CHRIST
  - f) YOU ARE IN THE CHURCH (no longer a nation)
  - g) YOU have ALL the PROMISES of GOD
  - h) YOU have GOD in this WORLD!
3. How did all of this happen?

**E. you...have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

1. BY CHRIST'S WORK on the CROSS!
2. Notice – this is PASSIVE "you have been brought near"
3. YOU DIDN'T DO IT! CHRIST did IT FOR YOU
4. CHRIST's CROSS has CROSSED the CHASM between you and GOD!
5. He PICKED you UP and TOOK you TO THE OTHER SIDE!