

FACING AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Ephesians 2:11-13

A. Foundation

1. In Christ we are overcomers (**1 John 5:4-5**), more than conquerors (**Romans 8:37**), winners (**2 Corinthians 2:14**) and leaders who come out on top (**Deuteronomy 28:13**). Somehow, when problems come into our lives, we seem to forget these truths from God's Word, and we act as if we are helpless and hopeless; as if we no longer have God in our corner. Nothing could be further from the truth! If you are a born-again believer, God is with you and you have everything you need in Christ Jesus to conquer any challenge you'll ever face!
2. **Ephesians 2:11-13** – *Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

According to the passage, Gentiles (those outside the family of God) were at one time:

- a. without Christ
 - b. aliens (or foreigners) of Israel
 - c. strangers to God's covenant promises
 - d. hopeless
 - e. without God
3. At one time, Gentiles had no access to Christ (the Messiah; the Anointed One and His Anointing). The anointing removes burdens and destroys yokes (*see Isaiah 10:27*). This means Gentiles (non-Jews) had no access to the burden-removing, yoke-destroying power of God. They also had no access to salvation through the Messiah, Jesus Christ.
 4. Gentiles were also foreigners to the commonwealth of Israel. Greek city-states bestowed valuable advantages, benefits and privileges to its citizens that were not available to non-citizens. Paul's point was that Gentiles were similarly shut out from the benefits God bestowed upon His people.
 5. Gentiles also were not partakers of God's covenant, so God's promises did not belong to them.
 6. This resulted in the Gentiles having no hope for a better life in this world because God was not in their lives.

B. *But Now ...*

1. That all changed when Jesus died for the sins of the world. Through His death, burial and resurrection, all people (not just the Jewish nation), have access to God.
2. **Ephesians 2:13** – *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

3. Once we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we: have Christ; are citizens of God's kingdom (meaning we have special advantages, benefits and privileges); are partakers of God's covenant promises; are full of hope; and have God in our lives.
4. So why do so many Christians still live as if they are like Gentiles, who "at that time" were without Christ and lacked all the benefits and power that flow from a relationship with Christ? How come so many Christians have not stepped into the "but now"?

C. Living as Overcomers

1. **Get off to the right start:** When facing problems or challenges, too many times we start in the wrong place. Getting off to a wrong start leads to ending up in the wrong place. Examples of a wrong start: (a) starting with the problem; (b) starting with other people to help you solve your problem; (c) starting with yourself. To face and overcome challenges, we must start with God.

2. **Three things to remember:**

- (a) **God is bigger than your problem.** The Bible tells us to magnify the Lord. To magnify means to enlarge or make bigger. Too many people magnify their problem or their situation. If you spend time making your problem bigger and bigger, it's no wonder you feel overwhelmed. Stop magnifying the problem and instead magnify the Lord. Always keep in mind that God is bigger than any problem you will ever face.

Scriptures to get us there:

- i. **Psalm 145:3** – *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.*
- ii. **Psalm 135:5** – *For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all Gods.*
- iii. **Proverbs 18:10** – *The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous run to it and are safe.*
- iv. **Jeremiah 32:27** – *Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?*
- v. In **Luke 11:20**, Jesus said He cast out demons "with the finger of God." All God has to do is flick His finger to remove any problem from your life!

- (b) **God cares about you.** One of tricks the devil often plays on us when we face problems is getting us to believe that no one cares. When we believe that no one cares that we have an issue or are facing what we believe is an insurmountable challenge, it leads us to feel sorry for ourselves and angry at others. Neither of these things helps us with our problem. It only makes things worse. The truth is God has blessed us with people in our lives who certainly care (even if it seems as if they don't). And there can be no question, that God cares about us. So even if no one else cares, God does. You and God are always a majority! Remember that.

Scriptures to get us there:

- i. **Psalm 8:3-4 (ESV)** – *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?*
- ii. **Psalm 139:17-18 (NLT)** – *How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me!*
- iii. **Deuteronomy 3:22** – *Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God he shall fight for you.*
- iv. **Luke 12:6-7** – *Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.*
- v. **1 Peter 5:6-7** – *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*

(c) God is with you. Another favorite trick of the enemy is to try to convince us that in times of trouble, we are alone. In the time of perfection, God looked at Adam and said, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). It was the first thing God pronounced as being "not good." By "man," God meant mankind – male and female. If it wasn't good for Adam to be alone before sin entered the world, how much more is it "not good" now for us to be alone? The devil understands this, which is why he tries to convince us that when we're going through, we're all by ourselves. The devil is a liar. Look closely, and you probably find there are people standing with you in your struggle. Even if not, God is there! God is with you!

Scriptures to get us there:

- i. **Hebrews 13:5-6** – *For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (See Psalm 118:6)*
- ii. **Isaiah 41:10** – *Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*
- iii. **Romans 8:31** – *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*
- iv. **Joshua 1:9** – *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*