



BUT NOW: FROM THEN TO NOW

A Devotional Journey Through Ephesians 2:11–18

KNOW — Ephesians Growth Journey

Read: Ephesians 2:11–18

BUT NOW

Paul begins this section with an unusual instruction:

Remember.

He asks believers to remember what was once true about them.

They were separated from Christ.

Alienated.

Strangers to God's promises.

Without hope.

Without God.

But Paul doesn't ask them to remember their past so they will continue living in it.

He wants them to understand the difference between **THEN** and **NOW**.

Then verse 13 changes everything:

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

Their past was real.

But Christ had established a new reality.

And spiritual growth requires learning to live from what Christ says is true **now**.

REMEMBER THEN

There is value in remembering where you've been.

Remembering can produce gratitude.

Humility.

Compassion.

Perspective.

Worship.

But there is a difference between **remembering where you've been** and **continuing to live there**.

Paul places a timestamp on their former condition:

At that time...

That was THEN.

Think About It

Are there things from your past that you still allow to define your present?

An old failure?

An old reputation?

An old fear?

An old relationship?

An old way of seeing yourself?

Remember

Your past can be part of your testimony without remaining your identity.

BUT NOW IN CHRIST

Paul doesn't say:

"But now you've improved."

"But now you've learned enough."

"But now you're more religious."

He says:

"But now IN CHRIST JESUS..."

Christ is what separates THEN from NOW.

The change isn't based simply on personal development.

Something has happened because of Christ.

Those who were once **far off** have been:

brought near.

Notice the Language

Paul doesn't say:

You came near.

He says:

You have been brought near.

God acted.

Christ closed the distance.

And Paul tells us the cost:

"by the blood of Christ."

Remember

Grace didn't tell the far-off to find their way home. Christ brought them near.

DON'T LIVE FROM THEN

Sometimes our circumstances change before our thinking does.

Our status changes.

Our season changes.

Our responsibilities change.

God opens something new.

But internally...

we're still living in what was.

We can be forgiven and still live condemned.

Accepted and still expect rejection.

Brought near and still think like outsiders.

Given hope and still interpret everything through hopelessness.

Ask Yourself

What is true about me NOW that I am still struggling to believe because of what was true THEN?

Growth requires allowing God's present truth to become more authoritative than an outdated identity.

DON'T LIVE FROM A “THEN” IDENTITY IN A “NOW” REALITY.

RECOGNIZE WHEN THE SEASON HAS CHANGED

This principle reaches beyond our past before Christ.

Throughout life, seasons change.

Relationships change.

Responsibilities change.

Assignments change.

Opportunities change.

We change.

Sometimes one of the hardest parts of growth is recognizing that something **isn't what it used to be anymore**.

We can become so attached to what God did THEN that we fail to recognize what God is doing NOW.

That doesn't mean dishonoring the past.

Remembering and moving forward can exist together.

Remember

You don't dishonor yesterday by obeying God today.

Ask God for wisdom to recognize the reality of your present season and courage to respond appropriately.

HONOR THE NOW IN OTHERS

Sometimes the THEN we struggle to release isn't our own.

It's someone else's.

We remember their failure.

Their old reputation.

Their former struggle.

Their previous season.

And even when change has occurred, we continue interacting with them according to who they used to be.

Paul doesn't do that.

He tells the Ephesians what they **were**...

and then deliberately announces:

BUT NOW.

Growth requires learning to recognize God's work in other people too.

Think About It

Is there someone you continue to define primarily by their THEN?

Has your view of them allowed room for growth?

Remember

Don't demand that someone continue wearing an identity God has already changed.

CHRIST IS OUR PEACE

Paul's thought doesn't end with individual change.

Verse 14 says:

“For He Himself is our peace...”

Christ brought people near to God.

But He also began bringing people near to **one another**.

People who had been separated.

People divided by hostility.

People accustomed to thinking in terms of:

us

and

them.

Christ begins creating something new.

Paul says He:

made the two one.

broke down hostility.

reconciled both to God.

This means our new reality in Christ should eventually affect our relationships.

Growth Question

If Christ has reconciled me to God...

where should His peace begin changing the way I relate to people?

WE BOTH HAVE ACCESS

Ephesians 2:18 says:

“For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.”

Notice Paul's language:

Through HIM.

We BOTH.

One SPIRIT.

One FATHER.

The people who were once separated now share the same access to God.

Nobody approaches as spiritually superior.

Nobody approaches as the preferred group.

Both come through Christ.

Both depend upon the Spirit.

Both approach the Father.

Remember

The Gospel doesn't merely change my relationship with God. It changes how I understand my relationship with God's people.

LIVING IN THE NOW

As you reflect on Ephesians 2:11–18, remember:

You were far — BUT NOW you have been brought near.

You were without hope — BUT NOW your hope is in Christ.

You were an outsider — BUT NOW you have access to the Father.

There was separation — BUT NOW Christ is our peace.

There was hostility — BUT NOW Christ is creating reconciliation.

THEN was real.

But so is NOW.

And Christ is the reason the reality changed.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take a few quiet moments with these questions.

- 1. What part of my THEN am I most tempted to carry into my NOW?**
- 2. What does God's Word say is true about me now in Christ?**
- 3. Has something changed in my life that my thinking has not fully caught up with yet?**
- 4. Is there someone else I am still defining by who they used to be rather than allowing room for who they are becoming?**

5. Where does Christ's peace need to change one of my relationships?

THIS WEEK

Don't try to change everything.

Pay attention to your **THEN language**.

When an old identity, old fear, old label, or old pattern begins defining your present, stop and ask:

What does God say is true NOW?

Then choose one action that agrees with the present reality Christ has established.

Growth happens when our thinking and living begin catching up with what God has already changed.

PRAYER

Father, thank You for reminding me where grace found me without requiring me to continue living there.

Thank You that in Christ, those who were far have been brought near.

Help me recognize what You have made true now. Renew my thinking wherever I am still attached to an old identity, an old season, or an old way of seeing myself.

Give me grace to recognize Your work in others. Where hostility, distance, hurt, or division exists, teach me to allow the peace of Christ to shape my response.

Give me wisdom to recognize what You are doing now and courage to live accordingly.

I don't want merely to remember what was.

Help me live fully in what You have made true now.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

HOLD ON TO THIS

Don't live from a “THEN” identity in a “NOW” reality.

Ephesians 2:13

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”