

WITHOUT CHRIST

"That at that time ye 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" Ephesians 2:12.

This verse contains a sad description of the former condition of those to whom this epistle was written. They had not even heard of Christ. Once they lived as if He had never come into the world to save man. Once they lived as if there were no heaven.

Four words describe the pitiful plight of the unsaved:—

1. Helpless.

x They were without life and strength. "Ye were dead in your trespasses and sins."

2. Hopeless.

"Having no hope." How miserable is any man's condition who does not have any hope. How dark the day when no ray of hope shines in! It is hope that keeps a man smiling when death is clutching at his heart.

3. Homeless.

Without Christ any man is homeless. We are all pilgrims, but we are not homeless if we have Christ.

4. Godless.

You were without God in a world teeming with evidences of His wisdom and power. In a world, loved by God, where God's Son lived, loved, and died to save sinners you were without God. You say, "But I have always believed in God." If you did not believe in God's Son the Word of God says you were godless. "That at that time ye 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" Ephesians 2:12.

Yes, that is the picture of every believer before he came to Christ. Believers were once without Christ. No tongue can tell the depth of wretchedness that is hid in this expression. There is no poverty like it; no destitution that is comparable to it; for those who die so, there is no outlook, but dire despair and irretrievable ruin. Without Christ there is no peace; there is no rest; there is no safety; there is no hope. Without Christ you are destitute of every benefit which He alone can bestow. Without Christ you do not have an advocate to plead your cause in heaven; you do not have a representative to represent you and prepare a place for you; you are without a Saviour; you are without anything that can make life blessed or death happy. Without Christ, ere long ye shall perish. Without Christ you will miss the richest joys of life, the greatest support amidst your troubles. Those who have Christ as their Saviour have everything that is necessary.

I know of no words that are any more dreadful than the two words, "no hope." We are familiar with hopelessness in common life. We know what happens in a sick-room when hope goes out of the patient. So long as the patient remains hopeful the doctor has a mighty helpmeet in his ministry, but when the patient loses heart and hope the doctor strives in the face of almost assured defeat.

The influence is similar in the ministry of the nurse. When the last chance is gone and there is no possibility of recovery, and the nurse has to labor confronted by sheer defeat, the service becomes a burdensome task.

A doctor stands beside a bed upon which lies a man who is very ill. With his finger on the patient's pulse; he is looking intently into his eyes; eagerly watching every movement and the way in which the sick man breathes. His wife and

children have gathered around the bed, looking anxiously at the husband and father, and then at the doctor. At last the doctor says, "no hope."

A ship has sprung a leak at mid-ocean; the sailors are working with all of their might at the pumps; the water is coming in faster than it is going out. At last the officer says, "no hope."

A man has been making every effort to get out of financial ruin, but at last he has to throw up his hands in despair and say, "no hope."

Armies going out on the battlefields without the inspiring presence of hope prepare themselves for defeat.

What prevails when hopelessness invades the sick-room and the battle-field is also experienced in the more secret life of the spirit, in the realm of religion. When a man becomes hopeless in the religious life he loses the very springs of activity, and he sinks in ever-deepening degradation. "Having no hope" are dark words, but even more so in the connection in which we find them is our text. You had better be without anything else than without hope. Regardless of your present circumstances, they are of little worth if you have no good hope for the future. I would rather be the poorest man in Kentucky and have good hope for the future than to be the richest man in Kentucky and have no hope for the future.

Desire, no matter how strong it may be, is not hope. Mere expectation, no matter how confident it may be, is not hope. Hope is a well-founded expectation for the future. Any expectation that has not a sure foundation is not really hope.

I. Who Have No Hope?

1. Anyone who denies the existence of God.

"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." He may cherish fond wishes about the future; he may entertain confident expectations about it, but they are not hope. The man who denies there is a God can have no well-founded expectations for future.

2. Anyone who discards the Bible.

If he rejects the Bible, he has no expectation for the future that has a solid and certain foundation. If he gives up the teachings of the Bible, he gives up hope. If he discards the Bible, the future is dark.

3. Anyone who rejects Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Some think they have ground for hope because they are not infidels. The Bible holds out no hope to any except to those who accept Christ.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

One who believes the Bible, but rejects the Saviour whom the Bible presents, has every vestige of hope swept away by that very Book he believes. For the man who rejects Christ the future has only blackest despair.

II. In What Way These Classes Have No Hope?

- (1) They have no guarantee of continued prosperity. They may be prosperous today, have perfect health, a comfortable income, hosts of friends, and all that a heart might wish in the world, but unless they are right

with God, unless they have accepted His Son, they have no guarantee these things will continue.

- (2) They have no guarantee of continued capacity to enjoy it. They may have money to buy the most expensive food for the table and yet not be able to enjoy it.
- (3) They have no guarantee of continued life.
"There is but a step between me and death." No man out of Christ has any good hope even for the next hour.

Some years ago, in the doorway of the library of the richest American of his day, in New York City, stood two men. The property of this man invoiced 1966million. He was in conversation with a business friend, discussing how to make more millions. You would say, he had bright hopes for the future, but you are mistaken. He had no hope. He pitched forward to the floor, and when Mr. Garrett picked up Wm. H. Vanderbilt from the floor he was a corpse. The next day someone on the exchange asked, "How much did Vanderbilt leave?" "He left it all."

2. In the life that is to come.

This life is but a brief span at the longest. In a few years each of us will be in eternity--in heaven, or in hell. But eternity is long and never ends. It is an awful thing to have no hope for eternity. A man out of Christ has no hope of --

- (1) Blessedness after death.
There is no light in the grave for Christless man. There is only eternal blackness and despair.
- (2) A glad reunion with friends who have gone or may go to be with Christ.
The believer loses friends, but he does not sorrow as those who have no hope. A Christless man will never meet his sainted mother again. A Christless woman will never meet her baby who departed to be with Christ.
- (3) Pardon in eternal world.
That is freely offered here. "No hope."

III. The Believer In Christ Has Hope.

1. In the life that now is.

We do not know what the future may bring, but it will be for good. Rom. 8:28. We know that God will supply our needs. He will not withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly.

2. In the life that is to come.

"An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." He has the assurance that he is a child of God, an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ. That is wonderful hope--a glorious hope.

Which do you prefer tonight? "No hope" or this hope? You have your choice. Which will you take? Don't neglect Him! Don't reject Him! Accept Christ as your Saviour and confess Him now while we sing.