

## Ephesians – Week 6 – But Now – Bible Study Helps

Title: But Now

Sermon Summary:

This Resurrection Sunday sermon focuses on the transformative power of the resurrection through the phrase "but now" found in Ephesians 2. It emphasizes the dramatic contrast between humanity's lost condition without Christ and the new position believers have through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. The message highlights how Gentiles were once far from God—without hope, without Christ, aliens from God's promises—but through the blood of Jesus Christ have been brought near to God. The sermon celebrates the resurrection as God's ultimate "but now" moment in history, demonstrating that the blood of Christ was sufficient to remove the distance between God and humanity. The sermon calls listeners to recognize this dramatic change in their position before God and to live accordingly, while also extending an invitation to those who have not yet trusted Christ as Savior.

Key Points:

- The phrase "but now" marks a dramatic, decisive turning point in the Christian's position with God
- Gentiles were in a hopeless condition: without Christ, aliens from Israel, strangers from God's promises, having no hope, and without God in the world
- Despite being far from God, God was always close, desiring relationship with humanity
- Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection changed everything—providing the only way to be near to God
- The resurrection proves Christ's deity and validates all His claims
- Through Christ's blood, believers who were once far off are now made near to God
- Christians now have bold access to God's throne, unlike the Old Testament system where only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year
- The empty tomb announces that Christ's blood was enough to pay for all sin
- This dramatic change should result in believers living differently, worthy of their calling

Scripture Reference:

- Ephesians 2:1-13 (primary focus on verses 11-13)

## Ephesians – Week 6 – But Now – Bible Study Helps

- Romans 1:16-20
- Romans 3:21
- Romans 6:20-23
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-20
- Colossians 1:21
- Galatians 4:8-9
- Hebrews 8:1-6
- Hebrews 9:22-26
- Hebrews 10:19
- Acts 17:22-31
- Isaiah 43:1
- John 9:25

### Stories:

- The illustration of women coming to the tomb early Sunday morning expecting to find death and finality, but instead finding the stone rolled away and hearing the angel declare "He's not here, He's risen"
- The analogy of being locked out of a house or car to illustrate how heaven was locked to humanity before Christ
- The comparison of knowing about a sports athlete (Larry Bird) versus actually knowing them personally, illustrating the difference between knowing about God and knowing God personally
- The blind man's testimony from John 9:25: "I was blind and now I see"
- Paul's encounter with the Athenians at Mars Hill, finding their altar "To the Unknown God" and declaring the true God to them
- Illustrations about visiting a cemetery—the contrast between the quiet finality of death and the dramatic announcement of resurrection
- The Old Testament high priest entering the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement with a bell attached to his ankle in case he died

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### Discussion Questions

How does understanding our past condition as being 'dead in trespasses and sins' deepen our appreciation for what Christ has done for us through His resurrection?

What does it mean practically in your daily life that you have been brought 'nigh' to God by the blood of Christ, and how should this reality change the way you approach prayer and worship?

The sermon contrasts the Jewish high priest entering the Holy of Holies once a year with our ability to come boldly to God's throne. How does this dramatic shift in access to God impact your confidence in approaching Him?

Paul says in Acts 17 that God is not far from any of us, yet we were far off from Him. How do you reconcile this paradox, and what does it reveal about God's desire for relationship with humanity?

The phrase 'but now' marks decisive turning points throughout Scripture. Can you identify the 'but now' moment in your own life when everything changed through Christ?

If the resurrection of Jesus Christ truly happened as historical fact with hundreds of eyewitnesses, how should this reality affect the way you live your life differently from the world around you?

The sermon mentions that God 'winked at' our past ignorance but now commands all people everywhere to repent. How does God's willingness to overlook our past affect your understanding of His grace and mercy?

In what ways might Christians today be tempted to 'turn back to the weak and beggarly elements' as mentioned in Galatians 4:9, and how can we guard against this?

The Gentiles were described as having 'no hope and without God in the world.' How can we effectively communicate the hope of the gospel to people in our lives who are in this same condition today?

Hebrews says that Jesus offered Himself as a final sacrifice 'once in the end of the world.' How does the finality and completeness of Christ's sacrifice give you assurance about your salvation?

# Small Group Discussion Guide: "But Now" - Ephesians 2:11-13

## Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

**Icebreaker:** Share a time when something in your life dramatically changed for the better. What was the "before and after" like?

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## Scripture Reading

Read together: **Ephesians 2:11-13**

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## Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **Our Lost Condition (Before Christ)**
    - Without Christ
    - Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel
    - Strangers from the covenants of promise
    - Having no hope
    - Without God in the world
  2. **"But Now" - A Dramatic Turning Point**
    - The phrase "but now" marks a decisive, dramatic change in position with God
    - Through Christ's blood, we who were far off are brought near
  3. **The Resurrection Changes Everything**
    - Christ's resurrection is the ultimate "but now" moment in history
    - It proves Jesus is who He claimed to be
    - It validates the power of His sacrifice
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## Discussion Questions

### Part 1: Understanding Our Past (15-20 minutes)

1. **Read Romans 1:18-21.** How does this passage describe humanity's knowledge of God even before salvation? Why do people suppress this truth?
2. The sermon described being "locked out" of heaven. How does this illustration help you understand the separation between God and humanity caused by sin?

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3. **Personal Reflection:** Can you remember what your life was like before you met Christ? What were you searching for? What gave you hope (or didn't)?
4. Why is it important to remember our "lost condition" even after we're saved? How does this impact our gratitude and evangelism?

### Part 2: The Power of "But Now" (20-25 minutes)

5. **Read the following "but now" passages and discuss the dramatic change in each:**
  - o Romans 6:20-22 (from servants of sin to servants of God)
  - o Colossians 1:21-22 (from enemies to reconciled)
  - o Galatians 4:8-9 (from not knowing God to being known by God)

Which of these resonates most with your personal story?

6. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-20.** The sermon mentioned this as a "mic drop" moment. Why is the resurrection so central to our faith? What would be different if Christ hadn't risen?
7. The sermon stated: "If Jesus Christ came out of that tomb alive, all of human history has changed." How should the reality of the resurrection affect how we live our daily lives?
8. **Read Hebrews 9:22-26.** How does Jesus' sacrifice differ from the Old Testament system? What does it mean that we can now "come boldly" to God's throne (Hebrews 10:19)?

### Part 3: Living in the "But Now" (20-25 minutes)

9. **Read Acts 17:22-31.** Paul tells the Athenians that "the times of ignorance God winked at, but now commands all people everywhere to repent." What does this teach us about:
  - o God's patience with our past?
  - o Our responsibility moving forward?
  - o The urgency of sharing the gospel?
10. The sermon asked: "Are you living like a new creature?" In what areas of your life do you still live like the "old you" rather than the "but now you"?
11. **Ephesians 2:13** says we are "made nigh by the blood of Christ." What does it mean practically to live "close to God"? What draws us near? What pushes us away?
12. How should the dramatic change in our position (from far off to brought near) affect:
  - o Our prayer life?
  - o Our worship?
  - o Our relationships with others?
  - o Our daily choices?

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## Practical Applications

**This Week's Challenge:**

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Choose **ONE** of the following to practice this week:

**Option 1: Testimony Writing** Write out your personal "but now" story. Include:

- What your life was like before Christ (your "lost condition")
- How you came to know Jesus
- The dramatic changes He's made in your life
- Share it with at least one person this week

**Option 2: Gratitude Practice** Each day this week, identify one specific way Christ has brought you "near" to God that you couldn't accomplish on your own. Journal or share these with an accountability partner.

**Option 3: Gospel Conversation** The sermon mentioned that God is "one phone call, one prayer, one testimony" away from someone. Pray for one specific person who needs Christ, and look for an opportunity to share your faith with them this week.

**Option 4: Bold Access** Since we can now come "boldly" to God's throne (Hebrews 10:19), commit to a specific daily prayer time this week. Approach God with confidence because of Christ's blood, not your own worthiness.

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## Memory Verse

**Ephesians 2:13** - "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

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## Prayer Prompts

**Spend time in prayer together, focusing on:**

1. **Thanksgiving** - Praise God for the dramatic "but now" in your life through Christ's death and resurrection
  2. **Confession** - Ask God to reveal areas where you're living like the "old you" instead of the "new creation"
  3. **Intercession** - Pray for specific people in your lives who are still "far off" from God, that they would experience their own "but now" moment
  4. **Commitment** - Ask God to help you live worthy of your calling and to boldly share the hope you have in Christ
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## Closing Thought

"The empty tomb was God announcing: The blood was enough."

How will you live differently this week knowing that Christ's blood was enough to bring you from death to life, from far away to close, from hopeless to eternally secure?

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## Leader Notes

- **Be sensitive** to group members who may not yet have a salvation testimony. This could be an opportunity for someone to trust Christ.
- **Encourage authenticity** when discussing past struggles, but maintain appropriate boundaries
- **Keep the focus** on what Christ has done, not on our efforts or worthiness
- **End on hope** - the resurrection means our "but now" is permanent and secure

# 5-Day Devotional: But Now - The Dramatic Change of the Gospel

## Day 1: From Death to Life

**Reading:** Ephesians 2:1-5

**Devotional:** "But God, who is rich in mercy..." These three words mark the greatest transition in human history. Before Christ, we were spiritually dead—unable to respond to God, trapped in sin, following the course of this world. Our condition was hopeless, our future certain destruction. But God intervened when we reached our limit. His mercy didn't wait for us to improve or earn it. While we were still dead in our sins, He made us alive together with Christ. This is grace—undeserved, unearned, unstoppable. Today, pause and remember your own "but God" moment. Let gratitude fill your heart for the One who reached down into your death and spoke life.

## Day 2: From Far Off to Near

**Reading:** Ephesians 2:11-13

**Devotional:** "But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ." The distance between a holy God and sinful humanity was infinite—an unbridgeable chasm. We were aliens, strangers, without hope, without God in the world. We stood outside the locked door of heaven with no key, no access, no way in. Then Jesus shed His blood. That precious blood didn't just improve our position; it removed the distance entirely. The door swung open. We now have bold access to the Father's throne. You are no longer far off. You are near. You belong. The blood was enough. Live today with the confidence that comes from knowing you are welcomed into God's presence.

## Day 3: From Ignorance to Truth Revealed

**Reading:** Acts 17:22-31

**Devotional:** "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." God looks at our past—all the wandering, the false worship, the wasted years—and in His mercy, He moves forward. He doesn't dwell on what was; He calls us to what can be. The resurrection of Jesus Christ changed everything. It proved His identity, validated His claims, and opened the way to salvation. God is closer than we think, just one prayer away, yet our sins separate us. But now, through Christ, the way is open. The empty tomb announces that the blood was enough. Repentance isn't punishment; it's the doorway to freedom. Turn to Him today. Let go of yesterday and embrace the new life He offers.

## Day 4: From Blind to Seeing

**Reading:** John 9:1-25

**Devotional:** "One thing I know: I was blind, but now I see." The blind man's testimony is simple yet profound. He couldn't explain all the theology. He didn't understand every detail. But he knew his life had been transformed. Before Jesus, darkness. After Jesus, light. This is the Christian testimony—a decisive turning point that divides life into "before" and "after." You may not have all the answers. You might struggle to articulate complex doctrine. But you know what Jesus has done for you. You were lost; now you're found. You were bound; now you're free. You were condemned; now you're forgiven. Don't let complexity silence your story. Share your simple, powerful truth: "I was blind, but now I see."

## Day 5: From Death to Resurrection Life

**Reading:** 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

**Devotional:** "But now Christ is risen from the dead!" This is the mic-drop moment of human history. If Christ didn't rise, our faith is worthless, our preaching is empty, and we're still dead in our sins. But He did rise! Hundreds witnessed it. The tomb is empty. Death has been defeated. Because He lives, everything changes. Your sins are forgiven. Your future is secure. Your hope is certain. The same resurrection power that raised Christ from the grave now works in you. You are not who you used to be. The old has passed away; all things have become new. Live today in resurrection power. You serve a living Savior who conquered death itself. Let that truth transform how you face every challenge, every fear, every tomorrow.