

No More Strangers and Foreigners

Sermon Delivered on February 25th, 2024
AM Service

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Text:

Ephesians 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12: 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: 13: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14: For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16: And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18: For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Ephesians 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20: And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21: In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Introduction

We saw last week how the Lord Jesus Christ by His sacrificial work has reconciled Jew and Gentile. By His atoning work the middle wall of partition brought about by the ceremonial laws has been broken down. By His blood shed on the cross of Calvary, He has brought the Jew and Gentile to Himself and to one another. The result is that Jew and Gentile together have access unto the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit.

Now in the next section from verses 19 to 22, Paul continues to drive home what he has been saying in the earlier verses—he reminds the Gentile believers in Ephesus what they were and what they have now become in Christ. It's all because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ resulted in **two wonderful effects**. First, through His blood Jesus Christ **destroyed the hostility and enmity** between Jew and Gentile. Secondly, through His blood, Jesus Christ created a “new man,” **a new kind of people, called the church**. The apostle Paul wants the Ephesian believers to see what their privilege and their standing are as the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He does that by using **several images to describe the church** that they are now a part of and to help them understand what the Church is.

I – The Image of a Kingdom

The first image that the apostle Paul uses to describe the church is the image of a kingdom.

Ephesians 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but **fellowcitizens** with the saints, and of the household of God;

Paul begins with the phrase “**now therefore**” which draws our attention back to the preceding verses, where he reminds them of their former condition apart from the grace of God.

We must remember what we were apart from the grace of God.

Ephesians 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12: That at that time ye were (1) without Christ, being (2) aliens from the commonwealth (citizenship) of Israel, and (3) strangers from the covenants of promise, having (4) no hope, and (5) without God in the world.

In other words, as Gentiles, we were **outsiders**, were **objects of Jewish contempt**, and were **spiritually bankrupt**. We were “**strangers and foreigners.**” If you are “strangers and foreigners” in another country, you are in a place to which **you do not belong**. You are in a country that is **not your own**. You are **separated** from others by **culture**, by **language**, and by **nationality**. Foreigners do not have the same rights as those in the country he is visiting. That was the former condition of the Gentile believers in Ephesus Paul was writing to. As Gentiles, we were strangers and foreigners. We were outsiders and have no rights and claims to the blessings and privileges as those who have full citizens of God’s kingdom.

But that has changed! Now that we are in Christ in the words of Paul, “**are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints ...**” You are **now citizens along with all of God’s holy people**. What a contrast with the dreadful state of the Gentiles described in **verse 12!** The word “**no more**” is a negative adverb of time which a **complete and permanent change**. The believing Gentiles are completely and absolutely no longer what they were before. Those who are in Christ, are no longer outsiders, no longer aliens, but are now fellowcitizens with the people of God in His kingdom. We were once excluded from the rights of citizens, but now share citizenship with the saints. Paul in **Colossians 1:13** writes, God has “**delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.**”

Albert Barnes puts this way, “*All foreigners were regarded as ‘strangers,’ and Jews only were supposed to have near access to God. But now, says the apostle, this distinction is taken away, and the believing heathen, as well as the Jew, has the right of citizenship in the New Jerusalem, and one, as well as another, is a member of the family of God.*” (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

Philippians 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

The word “conversation” here means citizenship. We are now recognized and accepted as citizens of heaven! Before we came to Christ our citizenship was in the world, we belonged to the world. But when we came to Christ, we became strangers and foreigners in the world because

now that we are in Christ our citizenship is in Heaven. We are in the world but not of the world. Truly we can sing,

*This world is not my home I'm just a passing through
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore!*

II – The Image of a Family

The second thing that Paul uses to describe the church is the image of a family.

Ephesians 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of **the household of God**;

Not only are we “fellowcitizens,” but we are also now “of the household of God.” This means that we are not merely citizens of God’s kingdom; **we are also members of God’s family**. When we were saved by the grace of God, we were “born again,” and **now we belong to the family of God** (John 3:3, 7). The family imagery is seen in the many places where God is called our Father and we are called brothers and sisters in the Lord. We are God’s children through the new birth.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Romans. 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15: For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16: The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Galatians 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27: For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Oh, what a wonderful thing it is to be a citizen of Heaven, **but more wonderful it is to be belong to the family of God**. This is a **far more intimate relationship** and far **more glorious** than merely being a citizen of a country. As a citizen I can know about the King, and I might be able to meet the King, but as a son, **I know the King!** I am related to the King in the most intimate way. Amen!

*From the door of an orphanage to the house of the King,
No longer an outcast, a new song I sing;
From rags unto riches, from the weak to the strong,
I'm not worthy to be here, but praise God I belong!*

*I'm so glad I'm a part of the Family of God,
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family, the Family of God.*

- Bill & Gloria Gaither -

I love how Steven J. Cole puts it, “*In addition to assuring us of God’s fatherly love and care for us, this truth affects our mindset toward the church. If the church is a Sunday program that you attend, then you go for what you can get out of it. But if the church is the family of God, then you are a member with your brothers and sisters. Families gather for fundamentally different reasons than audiences do. Families get together for relationships because of the common family bond. Family members don’t threaten to go join another family if there are conflicts or if the family gatherings are not meeting their needs. The family bond keeps them together so that they work out their differences in love. Or at least that’s what should happen in Christian families and in the family of God!*” To which I say a hearty Amen!

III – The Image of a Building or a Temple

Third and last image that Paul uses in this passage to describe the church is the image of a building.

[Ephesians 2:20](#) And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; [21](#): In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: [22](#): In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Not only are we in the kingdom and in the family, but we are also part of His **building**. This is not saying the church is a building. The Church is not material building or physical temple. It is not a temple made by human hands. It is not made of wood, or brick, or stone, or marble. **Though the Church is not the building, the Church is like a building.** The image of a building is just another way of describing the body of Christ, of which all those who are in Christ are a part.

Every building must have a **foundation, cornerstone, and superstructure**. A building without a good solid foundation will not last, will not stand and will collapse. According to our text the foundation upon which the church is built is **the foundation of the apostles and prophets**. But please don’t misunderstand Paul. He is not saying that the foundation of the church are the apostles and prophets themselves, for Paul himself writes in [1 Corinthians 3:11](#), “[For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.](#)” What Paul is basically saying is that **the truth that was entrusted to the apostles and prophets that they proclaim is the**

foundation upon which the church is being built. We see this in [Acts 2:41-42](#), where Peter after preaching the resurrection and repentance and faith, many received and believed his message.

[Acts 2:41](#) Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. [42:](#) And they continued stedfastly in the **apostles' doctrine** and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

The Church is built upon truth, upon the apostle's doctrine. And what is the main doctrine that they build the Church? It is founded on **the doctrine of Christ**; delivered by the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New Testament. **Jesus Christ Himself, the only true Foundation, was the great subject of their preaching and ministry.**

Jesus Christ is not only the foundation but also **the chief cornerstone**. The cornerstone is that which supports the whole structure. It is that which most strategic in the whole structure. **The cornerstone must be strong** enough to hold and support the structure. Not only must the cornerstone be strong but also **it must be precise** to align the whole structure. **It must be straight and square** so the rest of the building would be straight and not crooked. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone by whom the church measures and aligns her message and ministry.

[Ephesians 2:21](#) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

In Christ the whole building, are being fitted or joined together. We are like stones or bricks being fit together to form the temple. We are carefully being joined together in Him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. **Each stone is carefully selected and carefully being formed.** The Church is not just a collection of loose stones and timbers. The stones are carefully being formed and chiseled out, smoothed out and framed so that they would perfectly fit and aligned together.

Taking every individual stone to fit in the building. **We are not randomly thrown into the pile of rocks and bricks.** A careful and meticulous work is behind it, so that we will all be harmoniously and inseparably linked to one another.

This is a work in progress. Look at the text again.

[Ephesians 2:21](#) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

It is an ongoing work. Jesus did not build His church once and for all. Jesus is still building His church. It is under construction. **The Church is like a construction site.** What does a construction site look like? It's dusty. Still lots of work to be done.

The work of a church is not going to be clean. It's not always going to look just so, because it is a construction site. There is always going to be new people coming in and they have sin issues, and they need to be disciplined. They need to be helped. All of us need to be made mature.

It is a work in progress. God is building it little by little. We have to be patient. We cannot be in hurry. Our Lord is laying the stone, one stone at a time. But patiently over time and relentlessly God is building His church. But having said that **the Church is a work in progress, we need to**

understand the foundation has already been laid out. The laying of the foundation is done. It is completed in the past. That is why there no more apostles and prophets today because the foundation has been laid. There no more new revelation needed. The foundation is firm and sure.

[Ephesians 2:22](#) In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Here is the end-goal of God in building us together—it is **for the habitation of God through the Spirit**. Isn't that's why men build houses? Men build houses so that men may dwell in them. The end design of God is for the habitation of God through the Spirit. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. God dwells in all believers now. They become the temple of God through the working of the blessed Spirit.

Closing Exhortations

Before coming to Christ, we Gentiles were “[aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world](#)” ([Eph 2:12](#)). But now that we are in Christ Jesus, even as Gentiles, we are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God’ and a building or temple “[for an habitation of God](#)” ([Ephesians 2:19, 20-22](#)).

What a wonderful contrast! What humbling and glorious truth! Lehman Strauss says it this way, “*Think of it, dear Christian, we are the habitation of God ([Eph 2:22](#)), His dwelling place on earth. Does your heart enter into this blessed truth? God has taken up His residence in the Church, in each believer. The true Church is of perfect and harmonious design, its beauty and holiness surpassing any shrine or building made with human hands. The most sacred spot on earth is no towering cathedral with stained glass windows, but the believer’s heart where God has come to dwell. While the building is not now complete, it will be one day, and then all creation will view its splendor and give praise and glory to its Creator and Designer.*” ([Ephesians 1-3](#) The Calling and Design of the Church)

My prayer, my hope is that Grace & Truth will be an assembly of people who will have a high view and an amazing reverence for and deep commitment to the church. For better or worse, we will strive together for the faith of the gospel. For better or worse we as citizens of Heaven, as members of God’s family, and as God’s habitation, will carry the name of Jesus Christ. We will carry the church of Jesus Christ in our hearts into our family and into community.

Are you a citizen of Heaven? Are you a child of God, belonging to the family of God? Are you part of the building that Christ is building for God’s dwelling place? If not, seek the Lord while He may be found!

AMEN!