

Ephesians 2:19-22 Where Are You From

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[0 : 00] Considering this last section in Ephesians 2, verses 19 through 22, verses 19 through 22. But to get the flow of what Paul's saying, we're going to read from Ephesians 2, verse 11, down to the end of the chapter.

As I said, it's these last three verses that we're considering in Ephesians 2. But it'll be good for us to see the whole flow of Paul's argument. Ephesians chapter 2, I'm beginning to read at verse 11. This is the Word of God. Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands.

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.

[1 : 20] And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Amen. This is a reading of God's inspired and inerrant word.

Let's turn please to Psalm 118. Psalm 118. We've sung some of it, we've read some of it, but we're going to read the whole of the psalm together just now.

Psalm 118 in our Bibles. As I say, Paul alludes in his letter to the Ephesians to this psalm with a reference to Christ Jesus being the cornerstone.

[2 : 40] Psalm 118, beginning to read at verse 1. This is the word of God. We'll give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Let Israel say, his steadfast love endures forever. Let the house of Aaron say, his steadfast love endures forever. Let those who fear the Lord say, his steadfast love endures forever.

Out of my distress, I called on the Lord. The Lord answered me and set me free. The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?

The Lord is on my side as my helper. I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.

All nations surrounded me. In the name of the Lord, I cut them off. They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side. In the name of the Lord, I cut them off.

[3 : 46] They surrounded me like bees. They went out like a fire among thorns. In the name of the Lord, I cut them off. I was pushed hard so that I was falling. But the Lord helped me.

The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation. Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

The right hand of the Lord exalts. The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. I shall not die. But I shall live.

And recount the deeds of the Lord. The Lord has disciplined me severely. But he has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness that I may enter through them. And give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord. The righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

[4 : 47] This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice. And be glad in it.

Save us. We pray O Lord. O Lord we pray. Give us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord.

The Lord is God. And he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords. Up to the horns of the altar. Father. You are my God.

And I will give thanks to you. You are my God. I will extol you. O give thanks to the Lord. For he is good. For his steadfast love.

Endures. Forever. Amen. Let us turn. Let us turn then please in our Bibles. To Ephesians chapter 2. [5 : 46] Ephesians chapter 2. And verses 19 through 22. These last three verses of Ephesians chapter 2. One of the things about growing up in Northern Ireland after the Troubles.

Was that you could choose which nationality you desired to be. After the Good Friday Agreement. A parity of esteem between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. You could choose which nationality you wanted to be.

If I so desired this evening I could go home. I could download an application form for an Irish passport. And freely travel within the EU once Great Britain leaves the EU with my Irish passport. But I can also choose to have a British passport. So that when we leave the EU I will be able to travel freely within the Commonwealth using my British passport. You can choose what nationality you want to be.

You can choose which state you belong to. You can choose where your home is. There are other people in the world who aren't quite so fortunate.

[6 : 54] And for them to take a British or an Irish passport would mean being forced to give up their other passport. They would have to give up the passport of the country of their birth.

They are no longer considered to be citizens of their home country. But citizens of the country where they hold their passport. And it's a similar idea to what Paul talks about here in Ephesians chapter 2 this evening.

Paul tells these Ephesian readers, these Gentile readers, that they're no longer strangers and aliens. They're no longer stateless if you like. But that they are now part of the chosen people of God.

That they are now part of God's kingdom. They are no longer stateless. But have been given a home in Christ. We want to think about three things this evening.

See three things together from Ephesians chapter 2. Firstly, we want to think about belonging. How Paul tells the Ephesian believers here that they now belong together with the people of God.

[8 : 00] With all the saints. Secondly then, we want to think about what is built on. Paul tells them that they belong. But he then tells them what they're built on, if you like.

What reason they have to hope that they belong. And then thirdly and wonderfully, we're going to see how they're built together with the Jews. To form this new one community.

This new one state of God, if you like. So firstly then, we think about belonging, belonging. And we see that in verse 19 of chapter 2.

Belonging in chapter 2 verse 19. So we finished last week by thinking about how Paul tells the Ephesian believers that Christ has come.

That Christ has broken down that middle wall of hostility. That Christ has made one new people out of both Jew and Gentile. That Christ has broken down all of the things that divided them.

[9 : 01] That peace has been preached to those who were far off, the Gentiles. And peace has been preached to those who were near, the Jews. And as we come to verse 19 then, this is the practical outworking of that, if you like.

We come to the implications that Paul is wanting to give to these Gentile readers. Because, verse 18, we have access through the one spirit to the one father.

This then is the implication of that, verse 19. You're no longer, Paul says, strangers and aliens. But you're now welcomed by God.

You're no longer strangers and aliens. But you are now part of the people of God. To be a stranger in biblical times was to be someone who didn't belong.

Was to be someone who wasn't accepted. Now, don't get me wrong. Strangers and aliens could live in particular cities. But it was always clear that they didn't belong there. That they weren't from there.

[10:08] We get a sense of this. I didn't read this passage because we read it this morning. But we get a sense of this when we're talking about celebrating the Passover in the Old Testament. Because we're told that the strangers, that the aliens who are within your gates, may eat of the Passover if they so desire.

As long as they consent and understood what the Passover was all about, the stranger and the alien was welcome to eat the Passover. But they didn't belong.

It wasn't their home. It was someone who didn't belong to your city. It was someone who was an outsider. But even in that, notice the plan and purposes of God.

Because the Passover was the great celebration of God's deliverance. It was the great celebration of the fact that God had freed his people from slavery. And what does God say? That even those who are outsiders, even those who are strangers and aliens, if they so desire, they can come and learn about my great act of deliverance.

They can come and they can celebrate the fact that I've set my people free. That if the outsider so desired, they could eat the Passover.

[11:25] The plan and purpose of God was always that these Gentiles would be brought near. Was always that those outside would be brought in to the kingdom of God. And Paul writing to these Ephesian believers, verse 19 says, You're no longer strangers and aliens.

At one time you were. At one time you were outside. At one time you didn't belong. At one time you were strangers.

But now you're accepted. He says to them in verse 19, You're no longer this. So what are they? Well we get the answer in the second half of verse 19.

But you're fellow citizens with the saints. And members of the household of God. It used to be that you were outside the kingdom of God.

It used to be that you were strangers to being citizens of the household of God. But now that's what you are. You're fellow citizens.

[12:36] It used to be that you didn't fit in. But now you do. It used to be that you had nowhere to call your home spiritually. But now you do. You're members of the household of God.

Now we need to understand that a little bit more. Because you see for us, the idea of citizenship isn't really so strong I don't think.

But to be a citizen at the time that Paul was writing here was a very valuable idea. To be a citizen of a particular place carried with it a certain gravitas.

To be a citizen of a particular place often came with implied ideas about that place. So for example, if you were a Spartan. If you were a citizen of Sparta, you were considered to be a great warrior.

If you were a citizen of Athens, you were considered to be a great philosopher. The most valuable citizenship at the time was probably to be a Roman citizen.

[13:40] We see that in Paul's imprisonment. Some of Paul's imprisonments. Paul appeals to the fact that he's a Roman citizen. Paul says, is it lawful for you to do such things to a Roman citizen? And when they hear that he's a Roman citizen, they begin panicking.

Paul's Roman citizenship guaranteed him certain rights. Certain protections. And Paul here writing these wonderfully reassuring words to these Ephesian believers reminds them.

That they're citizens not of Rome. Citizens not of Sparta. Citizens not of Athens. But citizens. Of the household of God.

It used to be that you didn't belong. It used to be that you were strangers and aliens. But now you're citizens of the household of God. With all the saints.

With all the other fellow believers in Jesus Christ. You're citizens. Of this heavenly home. And notice how reassuring that would have been.

[14:51] Because not only does this new citizenship give them a place to live. Not only does this new citizenship give them a place to belong.

But it gives them a place to belong. But it gives them a place to belong. But it gives them a new family. It gives them a new people to belong to. A new community that they can be part of.

Not only are they citizens of the household of God. But that they have fellow citizens as well. But what about us this evening?

I mean what does this mean for us tonight? The most obvious question springing from the passage for us tonight is where do you belong this evening?

Where's your home tonight? It's amazing that some of the lengths that people will go to to feel accepted. To feel that they belong. You know you go to a football match on a Saturday and you see people wearing replica shirts.

[15:53] What are they saying? They say that we belong to this particular group. Whatever group it is. You'll see people who dress in a certain way. Who have their hair cut in a certain way.

Who speak in a certain way so that they feel that they belong. So that they feel accepted. But where is your citizenship tonight?

Where is your hope tonight? Is your hope in Boris Johnson in the UK? Is your hope in Nicola Sturgeon in the SMP? Is your hope in any of the princes that we read of in Psalm 118?

The best place to belong tonight is the household of God. That's the greatest citizenship that we can have. But have you been brought near by Jesus Christ?

Are you a member of that household? So that's the first thing to say. That's the most obvious question springing for us this evening is where do you belong tonight?

[17:01] Right. But secondly, for those of us who are in Christ. For those of us who belong to the household of God. Are we living as a family? Are we living as a community? You see that's what we said.

That being part of the household of God brought this new family. It brought this new community. It brought this new togetherness. As the church we are called to be the community of Jesus Christ here in Dumfries.

But are we living like a redeemed family? Are we putting others' needs before our own tonight? Are we forgiving those who sin against us just as Christ forgave us?

Do people see something different in us? Do they see how we love one another? That was one of the things that marked the church out in Acts. That was one of the things that marked the early church out as different in the book of Acts.

That they loved one another. That nobody thought their possessions were their own. But as each had need, they bought and sold. And gave the money to the poor.

[18:09] The great truth for us tonight. Is that in Jesus Christ we have somewhere we belong. Somewhere we're accepted as sinners saved by grace.

Somewhere we can be ourselves. And that places the church. But having said that then.

So having assured these Ephesian believers that they belong. Paul then turns to the question. Well what's the church built on? If we're saying that these people are members of the household of God. Well what's the household of God built on? What's it built around? And we see that secondly then in verses 20 and 21. We see what we are built on. On what grounds are they welcome?

On what grounds are they accepted? Well Paul tells them, doesn't he? Verse 20. That this household of God is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

[19:13] Now the term apostles is fairly uncontroversial isn't it? We've seen time and time again what an apostle is. An apostle is someone who has seen the risen Christ. An apostle is someone who has been commissioned by the risen Christ for a particular task.

A particular mission. It's generally accepted that the 12 disciples and Paul are apostles. But what about this term prophet? What about the prophets?

Have we been around church any length of time? I think that as soon as we hear the term prophet our mind instantly goes right. Okay. Old Testament prophets. That's how it works.

But is that what's being talked about here? Now initially when I read this. I would have said yes. I would have said that what Paul means here is that the church is built on the Old Testament.

The prophets and the New Testament. The apostles. That these two groups are sort of come together to form the household of God. And that's what the church is built upon. But everything I've read on this subject tells me that that's not what Paul means here.

[20:23] That he's talking about the apostles and the prophets of the New Testament. Those who spoke the word of God. Those who preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. They're the ones that the Gentiles are being grafted by.

That they're the ones through whom the message of the gospel came. That they're the ones through whom Christ was preached. And the Gentiles became the people of God. In a sense it doesn't really matter.

Either way Paul assures them that there is a foundation. Either way Paul assures them that there is a reason for their hope. There is a reason for their confidence. There's a reason for them to feel and know that they're accepted.

And that reason is the word of God. That reason is the gospel preached by the apostles. That reason is the word of God brought by the prophets. It's that that's the foundation Paul says. It's that that the church is built on. It's that the household of God is built on. The foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

[21 : 37] And the Bible has to be the foundation doesn't it? The Bible has to be the foundation for the church of God.

Now why do I say that? Some people today will say well you know. I like what I read in the gospels. I like the stories of Jesus being nice.

I like the stories of Jesus going around healing people. I like the stories of Jesus telling nice stories. But I really can't wear the apostle Paul. I really don't think that God would inspire something as hateful as that.

But as soon as we start chipping away at the authority of the Bible. We undermine the whole of the Bible. How do I know I can trust what I read in the New Testament gospels.

If I don't trust what I read of the apostle Paul. How do I know that the four gospels that we have. That tell us the story of Jesus' life. Are inspired. Whereas this stuff written by Paul isn't.

[22 : 43] You see the Bible hangs together. As a whole. The Bible is God's revealed word to us. And as soon as we start picking and choosing.

What bits of the Bible we like. We instantly make ourselves God. We say well I know better than God. This bit's good.

But this bit now I can go. The Bible has to be the foundation of what we do. As a church. Because it's the only sure foundation we can build on.

That's why we preach it. That's why we spend so long thinking about it. That's why I encourage you to read it every day. Because it's the foundation on which the church is built.

But notice that Paul continues. That isn't where he finishes. The church is built he says on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. But it's also built on Christ Jesus being the cornerstone.

[23 : 49] Jesus is the stone around which all of the other stones are laid. Jesus is the stone around which all of the other stones take their shape and their form from.

He is the stone upon which all of the other stones are built. I saw a good example of this the other day when Suzanne's folks were over for the new year.

We took them to Tully House Museum in Carlisle. And one of the sections of the museum is the Roman section. The various things for the kids to do. Various interactive displays.

And one of them was to build a wall. And they gave you lots of different sized stones to build this wall with. You know they gave you sort of big stones through sort of medium sized stones through to little tiny rocks and pebbles.

And one of our children who shall remain nameless wanted to build a wall. But they started with the little tiny stones. They put all these little stones and bricks in.

[24 : 48] And then they tried to put the big bricks on top of it. And you can imagine what happened. It fell. Why? Because it didn't have a good foundation. Jesus Christ, Paul says, is the foundation.

He is the cornerstone. He is the chief stone of the whole building. And it's from him that all of the other stones take their shape. It's from him that everything is built into a holy temple to the Lord. Jesus Christ has to be the foundation tonight. The touchstone against which everything else is measured. The thing on which the church must be built. You see we can build churches on various things.

If the truth be told. We can build churches on lots of stuff. You can build a church on tradition. You can build a church on social acceptance.

You can build a church based around people being nice to one another. But all of those will prove flaky one day.

[26 : 01] The true church is built on Jesus Christ alone. And any true church. Any true unity of the church. Must have Jesus Christ as the cornerstone.

Any true unity of the church must be based around the Lord Jesus Christ. What he has done and who he is. Because he is the foundation.

He is the cornerstone. The chief stone. But what's true of the church can be true of our individual lives. You see just as we can build a church on lots of things.

We can also try and build our lives on lots of things. We can build our lives on work. On family. On money. On career. On success. On progression.

But if we do that we are like the foolish builder. Who built this house on the sand. Because Jesus Christ must be our cornerstone tonight. Jesus Christ must be the foundation of our lives tonight.

[27 : 09] Having Jesus as the cornerstone. Having Jesus as the capstone if you like. Doesn't guarantee that our lives will be well. It doesn't guarantee that trouble won't afflict us.

But having Jesus Christ as the foundation guarantees that when trouble does hit us. When affliction does hit us. That our lives have that strong and secure foundation.

That foundation that cannot be moved. That's the foundation of our lives. That's the foundation of our lives. So here Paul reminds the Ephesians that they're built on two things. They're built on the word of God.

And they're built in Jesus Christ. If we're to see any progress in our Christian lives. If we're to see any growth in grace. We must be built around the same two things.

The word. And Jesus Christ. Thirdly. Finally then. Paul reminds them that they are built together. Verse 22. We see that.

[28 : 09] They're built together. They're being built together. They're being built together. Paul says. Into a dwelling place for God. By the Spirit. That the Holy Spirit. That God. In the person of the Holy Spirit.

Dwells inside each of them. As believers. And again. It's hard to miss the flow of this passage. Isn't it? What does Paul say?

Verse 19. At one time you didn't belong. At one time you were strangers. And aliens. But now. Your fellow citizens. At one time you knew where to belong.

But now you do. Why do they have somewhere to belong? Because of the word of God. And because of Christ. The foundation. And finally here. We see the purpose for why they're joined together.

We see the purpose of why they belong together. And that is. To be built up into a dwelling place for God. By the Spirit. They're being built up together. And that's what church is.

[29 : 08] This evening friends. It isn't just a place to come and hear sermons. It is that. But it's more than that. It isn't just a social club. Where we come and meet people that we like.

Rather church is a place where we come to be built up. Church is a place where we come to be encouraged. In our faith. Church is a place to come where we're joined together.

More and more on the two foundations. That we thought about a few moments ago. Church above all else is a community of believers. Who are striving and straining towards godliness in this life.

Church is a community of people who have been redeemed. By the blood of Jesus Christ. Are striving that others might know that redemption. Church above all else is a community of believers. Church above all else is a community of believers.

But we do that as we're built together. As we come together around these two foundations. Christ and the Bible. Christ and the Word.

[30 : 11] You see it takes all of us. It takes all of us with our gifts, our talents and our abilities to make a church.

A church isn't just me. A church isn't just the elders. A church isn't just whatever. A church is all of us. It's us as a community. We need each other so that we can be built into a dwelling place for God.

So what have we seen tonight then? That we belong to the household of God in Jesus Christ. We're built on the foundation of the Word. And the cornerstone Jesus Christ.

Christ. And we're being built up together. For the glory of God. What an exciting thought that is friends.

To know that we have a citizenship that is better than the citizenship of this life. To know that we have a hope that's better than the United Kingdom. To know that we have a hope that's better than

even Northern Ireland.

[31 : 26] We have a citizenship that is kept in heaven. A citizenship that will never perish, spoil or fade.

A citizenship built on the person and work of Jesus Christ as revealed in the scriptures. That's our home tonight in Christ.

Amen. Amen. Right now, as Peter puts it, we're resident aliens. Right now, we're strangers in this world.

But right now, we have a place to belong. Right now, we have a home that we're going to. In heaven. With Christ.

Amen. Amen.