

One in Christ

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[0 : 00] The chapter we read in Ephesians chapter 2, Ephesians chapter 2, and reading at verse 19, to the end of the chapter, Ephesians 2 verse 19, 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.

But nobody really likes being separated or isolated or set apart. It's part of human nature that we enjoy company.

Even in paradise, even in a perfect world, when God made Adam, God said it's not good for man to be alone.

So even in a sinless world, we weren't made for isolation. I suppose one of the worst tortures in many ways a person can have is being locked up for a long, long time in solitary confinement, where you don't see anybody day or night, week in, week out, month in, month out, year in, year out.

I'm sure we all at times we crave a wee bit of solitude, a wee bit of peace, and we say everybody wants that. But we couldn't abide, we couldn't bear that for any length of time, because we were made for companionship, we were made for friendship, we were made for togetherness.

[2 : 07] So isolation and separation, they're horrible ideas and terms. And it's something even from a very young age you will find that even children, young children, if they go to a new school, it's one of the things that they'll find so difficult, is trying to get in to make friends, to become part of a new group.

They often feel so much on the outside, and we don't like that. We want to feel part of a binding together.

And that's one of the wonderful things about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because it brings to an end isolation, separation. One of the wonderful themes running through the Gospels, running through the letters, and particularly in this letter, is the idea of unity and the idea of oneness, of togetherness.

And you will find references to it in so many different parts, that we find this togetherness, that we were made alive together, the idea of being raised together, of being built up together, and this idea of oneness.

There's one new man, one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. So there's this idea of togetherness, of unity, and of oneness.

[3 : 38] And that's one of the wonderful things about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because all of a sudden people from different backgrounds and different cultures, that there is an identity in Jesus that brings people together, that links people together.

It's just this, it's an unspoken sense of togetherness, of being one in Jesus Christ.

And Paul is, of course, working through this, highlighting this, and that's why he says in verse 19, so then you are no longer strangers and aliens, or sojourners.

That's people who don't have a resting place, people who are just on the move, people who may be displaced. Now, if you and I went to a foreign country, one of the things, there's many things that we'd find difficult, but one of the things that we would really lack, certainly to begin with, is knowledge.

Knowledge of the locality where we were in. We wouldn't know, many of the, probably wouldn't know any of the people.

[4 : 49] We wouldn't know the places to go. We wouldn't know the places to avoid. We would be finding, it would be a gradual, a very slow process, of trying to gain knowledge, so that we could kind of live and work out our time in that place.

And spiritually, that is also so true. Because when a person is outside of Jesus Christ, one of the real things that they lack is knowledge.

Knowledge of God. Now, it's possible that you might be here today, and you're not a believer. And you may have a great knowledge of God at one level.

You might have quite a profound theological knowledge. But there's a lot of things that you just don't understand. When maybe people are talking of Christian experience, it's just, it's passing you by.

You just, you're not, you're not understanding it. And there's lots of things that, that you hear, but they kind of drift, they drift away. And one of the signs of God working within a passion is the sense of that knowledge of himself beginning to develop and to grow.

[6 : 11] And that's why sometimes you will hear people say, as God is beginning to work within them, I don't know what's happening to the preacher. He's getting so much better. You often hear people, they talk in that way.

Well, there is no difference in the preacher. It is simply that the passion's understanding, the passion's mind is being opened up so that they're beginning to see, they're beginning to understand, they're beginning to appreciate what it is that God is saying to them of himself.

So that's one of the wonderful things that God does. So that there's this great awareness of what is happening, God opening the understanding.

Now, again, if a person is a stranger or a sojourner within a land, we often don't have, particularly just now we're very aware of, we see so many people on the move, so many people who are displaced.

And so many people, immigrants, and there are often people who are, we might term illegal immigrants, in the sense that they have come into a country and they have absolutely no rights.

[7 : 29] People, sometimes people smuggle themselves in or get smuggled in. Well, these people are living, as it were, outside the law. They're displaced people and they have no rights.

And I can't even begin to imagine how difficult that must be because you're having to keep, as it were, a step ahead of the law. You have to keep, as it were, on how you're going to provide and get things when there's no provision made.

You're putting yourself in a very, very, a very, very difficult place. Now, to a certain extent, that's what Paul is writing about here. Because when we are outside the kingdom of God, that is really where we are.

We have no rights. We have no privileges. You know, one of the greatest privileges that we can possibly have is where we can go to God the Father and we can call him Abba.

We're able to say to, Father. And it's just such a beautiful expression. One of endearment. One of love. One of trust. One of hope.

[8 : 40] But you know, outside God, outside the kingdom of God, you don't have that privilege. Because outside, that's what we're told, we're still strangers.

We're wanderers. We're displaced. We're these people who don't have privileges and rights. But Paul is telling us here, so that you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Now, whenever we think of citizens or citizenship, we think of a kingdom. And of course, that's so true. And that's exactly what God has done for himself.

He has established a kingdom. And he did that. He established this kingdom. We know the very heartbeat, and we'll see that in a moment, is his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But God has worked in a wonderful way right back. If we go to the call of Abraham, we see how God, at the very beginning, called this man, Abraham, out from Ur of the Chaldees, and he directed him eventually to Canaan.

[10 : 02] And he said to this man, you know, he said, what I'm going to do, I'm going to make of you a great nation. And this nation is going to be my nation. And I am going to bless all the nations of the world through you.

It's an amazing promise. And of course, we know the fulfillment of that promise came in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, Israel, who were, to begin with, the people of God, they had a special place in this

world.

And their special place was to worship the Lord and to hold forth praise to him to reveal who God is, the living and true God.

And they were to safeguard everything that God gave them. And you know, all the disasters that came upon Israel, when you read through biblical history, came about because they forgot their purpose.

They forgot who they were. They forgot why they were set apart by God. They forgot the great privilege that was theirs. And they thought that they had to become like the other people and the other nations.

[11 : 19] And so they started to embrace everything that the other nations had. And that's why God was having to deal with them so often in judgment, because they were forgetting who they were, who they belonged to, why they were here in the world, and what their main purpose was.

And so we see here that the apostle is saying to us, you are fellow citizens with the saints. Now, this is one of the great things that we also have to remember.

That once we come into the kingdom of God, just like Israel of old, we are the new Israel. This is how, this is where we're following on, where God is establishing His work through His people.

We must never, ever forget that ultimately we belong to God and we are here for His glory, for His purposes in the world.

And we must always remember that with regard to the church. Because sometimes we say, it's my church. Well, I know what we can mean, but it's not, it's not my church, it's His church.

[12 : 32] He talks about building His church. And many of the mistakes a church makes, they make when they forget that. When they tend to think, it's my church, where we become possessive about my, the Lord says, no, it's mine.

It's my church. And we've always got to remember that. And we've got to be careful sometimes not to get in God's way with what we are, who we are, and what we're doing within His church.

And so the Lord is promising to build His church. And that's one of the wonderful things. But we see also here, so then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Now again, when you become a fellow citizen, once you become part of a kingdom, then obviously you are subject, you are under the laws of that kingdom and under the authority of that king.

But we have the most wonderful privilege of being able to go to the king any day, any night, any hour. Can you imagine, I have no idea, I've never attempted, never tried, but if you ever wanted to try to get the ear of the queen, if you ever wanted somehow to be able to get direct contact with the queen, I would imagine that would be an incredibly difficult thing to do.

[14 : 06] I don't know how you would go about it, I have no idea, not something I've ever tried to do. But I'm just thinking about it, it would be incredibly difficult. But here we have immediate access to the king of all kings.

supposing we had access to the queen, supposing for some reason or other that the queen came up here and she met with you and she was said to you, look, she said, if there's anything you ever need, just phone me, here's a direct line to my residence, you can get me anytime.

You'd say, wow, that's amazing. But you know, supposing you had that and you phoned up, you couldn't go to the queen every day and say, you know, queen, I need strength, I need help in what I'm having to do.

I wish that you were here by my side all the time to help me. She would say, well, I can't do that. I can't even do that for my own family because the queen's just another person just like you and me. But here we have the king of glory and we can go to the king every single day, every hour of the day and say, king, lord, king of glory, I'm struggling in life.

[15 : 31] I have so many difficulties, I have so many problems, there's so many things that are difficult, will you please help me? And he promises to do that.

He promises to give grace and help and strength and peace. He is, what he's saying to us, in everything. Ask me.

Not just for certain things, not just even in spiritual realms, in everything. And he promises alongside that, the peace of God that passes all understanding.

and so we have this amazing privilege, a king who is never, ever, ever too busy to hear us, too busy to deal with us.

And we've also got to remember is that he's a king who is all wise. Because sometimes, in his wisdom, he will not give us what we want. And again, that, of course, is incredibly wise of him to do. [16:38] But we see we're not just citizens, but fellow citizens. That means that we have duties and responsibilities towards one another.

It doesn't mean that we, everything in the Christian faith is just about me. There's always a danger that we become caught up with ourselves. And that our prayer life is about ourselves. and that our life in general is about ourselves. Paul was always so aware of other people, of other people's problems, of other people's needs.

You see, we live in a very, very selfish world, a very self-centered world. The whole philosophy of this world's teaching is all about me. It's what I want, what I need, what is best for me.

It is not where we're giving consideration to others. That's why sometimes people find the gospel so challenging, it's so radical, it's so different.

[17:43] The apostle Paul was always aware of other people and other people's needs. In fact, the apostle went so far as to say, you know, there's a lot of things that I'm all right with, but I won't do them.

There are things I won't do for the sake of others. I'm so aware of brothers who aren't as strong as me and because of what I do, it might cause them to stumble so the apostle is prepared to forego and not do certain things in case it would cause offense or it would cause a brother to stumble.

See, that's thinking beyond yourself. It is thinking of the other person all the time. and that's what Jesus was about because Jesus' whole life as it was lived here was a life that was a life of giving to others.

That's what he did on the cross. He couldn't do more. If Jesus had been thinking about himself, he wouldn't have come into this world in the first place. But he was thinking of us.

It's quite amazing. So often we we just take it for granted. We take what our Christian faith so often for granted. We tend to forget just what it is that Jesus did.

[19:05] As we were, as in the prayer we're talking, remembering on this Remembrance Sunday what the tremendous sacrifice so many people gave in order that we would have the freedom that we do today.

But the greatest sacrifice of all was the sacrifice that Jesus made in order that we would be really free. And that above everything in the world is the most important thing.

And so we've always got to remember that we are fellow citizens. But not only do we see you're no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

This takes it even closer because you can be citizens without having too great an interaction with other people. But this is now family. You become family.

And the moment you become a Christian, that's what happens. You become family. You are united into one big family. We are now brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

[20:14] We know, that's what the Bible tells us, we know that we passed from death to life because we love the brothers. fellowship. And so there is this sense of the fellowship of the saints.

And Paul is very strong on fellowship. I suppose one of the great, if you really wanted to study Christian fellowship, study Paul's letter to the Philippians.

And you know, one of the things we'd say about fellowship is this, we often think that to enjoy fellowship, you have to be one with another. But you know something, you can enjoy Christian fellowship even when you're separate one from another.

Not even in the same room. Paul is talking about fellowship and he's in prison. And I think that's something very important for us to understand. Because the links and the bonds in the gospel are powerful, they are links and bonds that are forged in the Lord and they are prayerful bonds.

So that we are united to other people even when they're far from us. Paul was talking about his continued fellowship with the church in Philippi when he was back in prison in Rome.

[21:27] So you see, it's an amazing thing. I remember hearing an old Christian talking about how he believed, this is going back a long time, how he believed a real close friend he had in the gospel had died that day.

and he said, I believe so and so has died. And he said, how do you think that? He said, I've lost him. I've lost him in prayer. He said, we meet in prayer.

This person lived in another part of the island. And that's exactly what had happened. The person had died that day. So you can see straight away the power of the fellowship that people have here on earth.

the spiritual link that people have one with another. And that's part of what Paul is talking about here. And then he goes on to say, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

An apostle we know was somebody who was sent by the Lord, somebody who had actually seen the risen Jesus. Somebody who was equipped by the Lord at that time to establish churches and given great authority and power.

[22 : 55] The prophets of course were, we tend automatically to think of the Old Testament prophets, but there were prophets in the New Testament. We read about that even in this chapter. He gave the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and leaders.

And again, we read in 1 Corinthians 14, the one who prophesies, speaking to people for their upbuilding, their encouragement and their consolation.

So we've got to remember that in the early church, this was part of the role because we've got to remember the early church didn't have the New Testament in the way that we have, and so the Lord was equipping his people.

It was a special time. So Paul is telling us here that we find that the Lord is building on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Does that mean that the church that's being built was being built upon people like Isaiah and Jeremiah and people like John the Baptist and on the apostle Paul himself?

[24 : 00] No. But upon the message that they proclaimed. And what was the message they proclaimed? the message is Jesus Christ and him crucified. Because we read that Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner, that he is the cornerstone.

He is the one, he is the main part of the building. It's the part that supports everything else. It is the foundational part of it. And then we see what is happening 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. And it's here we see the Lord busy at work building.

If you can think of the, I suppose like you look at the likes of the dry stone dikes or the old buildings that people used to build. stone. It's amazing the structure that goes into them.

Big stones, little stones. And you can imagine that a builder would have all these stones laid out. They're not all the same shape, not all the same size.

[25 : 18] They don't all look the same. And that's so true spiritually. That's how it is with you and with me. We're all different within the church. That's one of the beautiful things about the Christian church.

We're not clones of one another. We all, with our own personalities, resemble Jesus. That is a great work. That is what the building is about, is building us to resemble Jesus.

But God is at work building, building, building. And the builder would take one stone and then he would look for another stone so that it would fit in exactly and then find another.

But you know sometimes you'd get these stones and you'd have to chip a bit off, knock a bit here and a bit there in order to fit that in. And that's what the Lord is doing with you and with me.

Chipping away at us. Now of course a stone, a stone can't feel anything. You can wallop a stone with a hammer all day and it won't feel a thing. You'll chip away at a stone and it doesn't feel a thing.

[26 : 24] But if we were to be chipped away, if somebody was to take a stone, or take a hammer and a chisel and start knocking away a wee bit here and there, it would be excruciatingly painful.

But you know, at a spiritual level, that's what God is having to do within our lives. He's having to remould us and reshape us to become part of this building.

He is fitting us into the building. This is this big, the wonderful structure. And that is why sometimes you go through such painful things.

Because the Lord is breaking you. And it's horrible being broken. None of us want to be broken. None of us want to be pressed down and pressurized.

Structurized. But the Lord is doing that in order to fit us into this structure, into this building. And see what it says in verse 22.

[27 : 28] In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. You know, there are certain things that almost take your breath away.

And this is one of them. That this structure of the people of God that is being built, His church of which you and I are part of these living spiritual stones.

It's for God to come and dwell in. You are the most important person in the whole wide world.

And you can say that of every believer. believer. Because you are the only thing that God is going to take out of this world for Himself to remain forever with you and in you throughout an endless eternity.

You are the temple. There was the old temple long ago. Today we're told you are the temple of the living God. I find that quite extraordinary. Where does God come to live?

[28 : 41] He comes to live in your heart, in my heart, through the Spirit. And that gives us, it brings us back to what Paul was saying about the responsibilities, the challenges to God and to others.

It's not just about me. In fact, it's not really about me at all. It's about Him and it's about others and about this sense of identity, this sense of structure.

this sense of building, this sense of future, this sense of God. And this is where the apostle is trying to bring our minds so that we will see who we are and who we belong to.

Let us pray. Oh Lord, our God, we pray today that you will bless us. We ask, Lord, that we will know spiritual and enriching blessing and that we may realize that you are the God of all grace.

We pray to bless us as a congregation. We pray, Lord, for the high free today and for the induction that took place. We pray for Reverend Hugh Ferrier who begins his ministry there and pray to bless him and that you will own that ministry with your power and presence.

[30 : 00] Oh Lord, grant us grace in everything. Guide us and part us with your blessing. we pray to bless the cup of tea and coffee in the hall after, forgiving us our sin in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to conclude singing in Psalm 133. Psalm 133.

And there was one intimation, I bet they'll give it just now rather than when we're all standing. It might not concern anybody here but a key was found in the church car park on Saturday morning so there's a strong possibility it could have been somebody from the induction on Friday.

A key was found in the church car park on Saturday morning. It has a metal key fob attached which looks like the Save the Children logo and that key has been handed into the police station.

I meant to intimate that at the beginning so if that's your key, it's at the police station. Psalm 133 from the Scottish Psalter and the Tunis Bishop Thorpe.

[31 : 10] Psalm 133 is on page 424. Behold how good a thing it is and how becoming well together such as brethren are in unity to dwell like precious ointment on the head that down the beard it flow even Aaron's beard unto the skirts did of his garments go.

Psalm 133 the whole sound of tune is Bishop Thorpe. Behold behold how good a thing it is and how becoming well together such as brethren are in unity in unity to dwell like precious ointment on the head that down the beard it flow in of the sea and to the skirt did of his garments go.

As as her men's Jew the Jew that doth on Zion hills descend by there the blessed God commands life that shall never land now may the grace mercy and peace of God the Father Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forever more Mhm Amen