

# ***Church: a Kingdom & a Family***

## ***Ephesians 2:19-22***

I believe that most Christians have inadequate or misguided views of the local church. Many Christians think in terms of attending church, not being the church. For them, church is a nice thing to attend on Sunday if you don't have anything else to do and if you weren't out too late the night before. So, they attend church much as you attend the theater. They hope that the program will be enjoyable and make them feel good. They may greet a few of the other attenders and then get home quickly, because they don't want to miss the big game on TV. But, meanwhile, they have no concept of being built together with other saints in the household of God, the temple where He dwells in human hearts.

Many Christians today choose their church as spiritual consumers, not in terms of being built up and ministering in the most holy faith. They shop around for a church that best meets their felt needs, much as they decide whether to shop at Wal-Mart or Target. If they like the services offered and they get a good feeling when they attend, they will give the church their business for a while. But, if they get bored or decide it isn't meeting their needs, they shop around for another one that suits them better. They don't evaluate a church on the basis of whether it teaches sound doctrine or whether it has an emphasis on the Great Commission or other biblical criteria. Rather, their evaluation is focused on whether or not the church meets their felt needs.

Is the Church a place that you go to – or is it a something that you are a part of?

Is the Church a club that you join or a Family to which you belong?

We have been studying verse by verse through Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Remember that this letter has two major sections: chapters 1-3 teach us who we are as believers; and chapters 4-6 teach us how we are to live as believers.

Chapter one, verse 3 through chapter 2 verse 10 teaches who we are as individual believers. We are **"blessed... with every spiritual blessing."** We were **"chosen in Him before the foundation of the world."** We have received **"adoptions as sons."** We've received **"redemption"** and **"forgiveness."** We've **"obtained an inheritance."** We've been **"sealed with the Holy Spirit."** We were **"made alive"** when we were spiritually **"dead in trespasses and sins."** We've received God rich **"mercy,"** His **"great love"** and His overwhelming **"grace."** We are God's **"workmanship,"** His masterpiece of all creation.

Then starting in chapter 2 verse 11, we moved into the second part of the first section. We have learned who we are personally in Christ, now we are learning who we are corporately in Christ, our identity *together* as Christ's body. And in this section Paul has repeated the word **"one"** to emphasize the unifying work of Jesus Christ. V. 15 specifically says that God has taken both redeemed Jews and Gentiles and put them together in **"one new man,"** a new humanity, a new race, a new nation. If you are saved you are part of that nation. In v. 14 Paul says that Jesus has **"made both one."** In v. 16 we are **"one body."** In v. 18 we have **"have access by one Spirit."** This **"one body"** is the Body of Christ, the church, the company of all God's people of all the ages.

When you were saved, you became part of that Body. Let's look quickly to 1 Cor.12:12-13:

**12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.**

**13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.**

We were spiritually baptized into Jesus. Water baptism pictures this. As believers we are undeniably linked to Christ and to *all* His people.

It is possible to attend a church, be baptized by a church, even be a member of a church and not be part of the body of Christ. "Being in a church doesn't make you any more a Christian than being in McDonald's makes you a Chicken McNugget!" We become part of the body when we are saved by grace through faith.

The Bible has many pictures that describe the church. Like we saw in 1 Corinthians 12, the primary one is that of a body. But there are a few other pictures of the church as well:

1 Cor.3:9 says **"...you are God's field, you are God's building."**

Jesus said in John 15:5, **"I am the vine, you are the branches."**

Jesus called us His **"flock"** in Luke 12:32 and John 10.

In other passages we are described as His **"bride."**

Heb.12:23 refers to us as **"the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven."**

Praise the Lord that by His grace we have a part in this Body. We who were once foreigners have become citizens, sinners have become saints, strangers have become family members, and the lowest class has become the first class. In this passage of Scripture, Paul describes this **"one new man"** in three more pictures: a spiritual kingdom or nation, a household or family, and a temple. We will look at the first two today and the third one next week.

## **I. We are Citizens of God's Kingdom (v.19a).**

A. We were formerly **"Strangers and Foreigners"** to the People of God.

1. Paul says **"you are no longer strangers and foreigners."** We used to be, but because of Jesus, we are not anymore. That's good news.

2. John the Baptist proclaimed in His day, **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"** (Mat.3:2). The kingdom was coming quickly. In Jesus the kingdom appeared on earth. In Luke 17:20-21, the Pharisees asked when the kingdom would come. Jesus replied that **"...indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."**

3. Jesus spoke of us when he said to the Jews in Mat.21:43, **"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it."** That **"nation"** is us, the **"one new man"** mentioned in v.14 made up of believing Jews and Gentiles.

4. What is the kingdom of God? It is where God is King, where He rules and reigns. The kingdom of God can be described as the rule and reign of God in our lives. When you became a believer, you surrendered your rights and submitted yourself to God's rule in your life. Because of that you are "**no longer**" a stranger or a foreigner, but a citizen!

## B. We now have been made full Citizens in His Kingdom.

1. Paul says we are now "**fellow citizens with the saints**." Every saved person is a saint and every saint is a citizen in God's kingdom. In His kingdom there are no "**strangers and foreigners**" among His people. There are no second-class citizens. There are no big "I's" and little "you's." There are only "**saints**" and we are all "**saints**," holy ones.

2. God is forever united with His "**saints**," the "**citizens**" of His kingdom. We are forever united together. We have a common language, the language of love. We have a common history, the community of faith. We have a common allegiance, to the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a common goal, the glory of God. We have a common destination, the heavenly kingdom.

3. Phil.3:20 says, "**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.**"

## C. Our Citizenship has Benefits!

### 1. *Citizenship gives us identity.*

a. The word "**strangers**" comes from a special Greek word that referred to groups of foreigners who settled in the city. We see that today as small ethnic minorities cluster together. The citizens often viewed these folks with fear and suspicion. "**Foreigners**" meant someone even further down the scale, a person who takes up residence, but never adopts citizenship... aliens and refugees.

b. On the other hand "**citizens**" were fiercely proud of their cities. In Acts 19, we see the civic pride of the Ephesians during the riot over Paul's teaching. People's names often spoke of their citizenship... Saul of Tarsus, Jesus of Nazareth.

c. As "**citizens**" of God's kingdom we have an eternal identity that shows in our fellowship and worldview. Paul continues to emphasize that the Jews and the Gentiles, who were formerly alienated from one another, are now fellowcitizens in Christ's kingdom. This means that there are no racial or cultural distinctions among the people of God. We all have equal standing before God in Christ Jesus.

### 2. *Citizenship gives us privileges.*

Roman citizenship was highly prized in the first century. According to Merrill Unger, Roman citizenship "*included the right of voting, of being elected to a magistracy, of appeal to the people, of contracting a legal marriage, and of holding property in the Roman community.*" Paul used his citizenship on several occasions, notably the privilege of appealing his case to Caesar. As believers we have the privilege of full access to God.

### 3. *Citizenship gives us security.*

We belong. We have a home in Jesus. In Christ, we belong. We are on the inside, not the outside. First Peter 2:9-10 puts it this way,

**9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**

**10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.**

And then Peter applies this truth to the way we live in verse 11, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

But because a single picture of the church is insufficient, Paul adds another:

## **II. We are Members of God's Family (v.19b).**

### A. We are in the Family because we are in Christ.

We've seen this theme already in Ephesians: 1:5 says that God adopted us as His children; 1:13 says we were included in Christ; 1:14 says the Holy Spirit guarantees our inheritance; 2:6 says we have been seated with Christ in the heavenly realms; 2:15 says Christ has torn down the walls and made us one.

There are not some who are "**citizens**" and some who are family "**members**." Rather to be a citizen is to be a member of the family too. These are not distinct roles but rather different view of the same reality.

Rom.8:17 says we are God's children "**and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...**"

Heb.2:11 says, "**For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.**"

Heb.3:6 tells us that Christ is "**as a Son over His own house, whose house we are...**"

Paul indicates very clearly that the church is God's family, His household in 1 Timothy 3:15 where he says, "**I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**"

### B. God's People relate together as a Family.

The point is that the church is God's family. We have been included in God's household, with all the rights and privileges and responsibilities that comes with that. Most of all, this second image is one of intimacy and belonging.

Where do you think of as "home"? Your answer likely depends on what stage of life you are at, but most people have a place that they call home – it is a place of warmth, of acceptance, of honesty, of no need to wear a bunch

of masks and pretend to be someone you are not. How did it get to be home? Probably the main factor is that there are people there who love and accept you. Another key factor is time – it is a place you would go and be at – not a place you run in and out of like a convenience store, but somewhere you would relax and spend time with the people there. A third factor is likely that you let your guard down – took off the masks – stopped pretending – and were yourself.

I love watching a new believer come into the family of faith and grow up in the Lord. It is like watching a child grow in my physical family. Some of us are children, some of us are older siblings. Some of us are parents and grandparents spiritually. When a person is saved, he becomes part of the huge family of God!

### C. As a Family we can be at Home together.

1. Someone has said, **"Home is a place, where when you show up, they have to let you in."**

2. I love to be at home with my physical family. There I don't have to act ministerial. I can wear my favorite pair of old jeans. I don't have to shave on my day off at home. I can take a nap on the couch. I can be at home!

3. In much the same way, we can be at home with our spiritual family. We can be ourselves, not some plastic ministerial image of what a good Christian should be. I don't mean that you should be so at home that you purposefully wear your oldest jeans and don't shave! I do mean that you can be you. You don't have to fake it. Be yourself.

You're family. You're included. When the family gets together, you want to be there, because it is a great privilege to be a member of this family. When they talk about the things that matter most to the family, the things of God, you delight in the conversation. You want to hang out with the family when they get together just because you're family. If the family of God gathers for worship, you're there. If they gather for a meal, you join them. If they meet to talk about family matters, you're there. You're committed because you're part of the family. Do you see the difference between just attending church and being a member of God's family?

God does not create spiritual orphans. It is never His intent that His children would be estranged from His family. So why would any Christian want to try to live out his or her faith apart from the family that God has given to them?