

Intro - Open to Ephesians 2:19-22

When you meet someone for the first time, you engage in what we lovingly called “small talk”. Our extroverts love it, don’t ya? Where are the extroverts in the room? Where are the introverts?... I am just kidding. But as you tiptoe into knowing someone you start with basics, What’s your name? Where are you from? If you get to know them a little deeper; Tell me about your family? It may not be the first thing you ask, but if you want to know someone, you have to know at least the basics of their family.

The Church is a family and when someone gets saved, they enter a family as a blessing of their salvation. Christians, don’t just get saved from death, we get saved INTO eternal life with a family. Salvation has relational implications with God and all whom he chooses. It’s different and similar to our earthly family. A man would be foolish to marry a wife with no indication of what his new family will be like. Someone who wishes to join the church of Christ must realize they are marrying into a family too.

Now in our text this morning I am going to go through a bunch of metaphors which Paul uses back-to-back to teach us the truth of the family of God. A unified family. Unified as members of the church.

It is the Gospel, the good news of salvation in Jesus, which produces a family who are built together in Christ and for God.

The Gospel produces a family who are built together in Christ and for God.

[Read Ephesians 2:19-22](#)

Pray

One – Family Citizens

[Read Ephesians 2:19a](#)

When we jump into a letter from Paul to a church, we have to understand at least two principles. First, Paul speaks authoritatively as an apostle and with a pastoral heart. He knows the Ephesians. He has spent several years among them and wants them to know the Gospel and its implications. This leads to the second principle: the context. This is verses 1-10 of chapter 2. They summarize the gospel message which leads to our citizenship.

Here is the brief version: We were dead in our trespasses and sins but have been made alive with Christ. This is not of our own doing, not of works but by grace we have been saved. It’s beautiful. Its transformative. This transformation is meant, by Paul’s particular usage, to bring together groups of people that would never otherwise interact, much less become family.

The wall between Jews and Gentiles ran deep. This is what Paul gets to in verses 11-22. The Gentiles, former idol worshipers and pagans, made up the vast majority of Christians in the Ephesian church. For Paul to say in verse 18 that they now have **access in one Spirit to the Father**, THAT IS HUGE. It is the basis upon which he then says in verse 19 that **“you are no longer strangers and aliens.”** Strangers to the covenants that the Jews have long benefitted from and aliens to citizenship in the nation of Israel. They have always been on the outside looking in... until now.

Now they have gone from aliens to citizens. Citizens who are joined to and have become the holy ones, the saints. When the grace of God saves us, we don’t just receive individual benefits, we join a kingdom with its citizen blessings.

Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington D.C. says, “When we receive God’s grace (Eph 2:1-10), we are included in a covenant community (Eph 2:11-22). Reconciled to God, reconciled to his people.”

In the modern day citizenship is being eroded as a legal category. I think the same is true in the church. Many American Christians have so drifted from the church, that they have no meaningful category for church membership. Yet, their lack of category cannot dictate our understanding and practice of it. To be a citizen is to be joined, legally and joyfully to fellow citizens. Citizens who have responsibilities and privileges to one another because they share the same King. This fits into Paul’s greater theme: unity.

Paul writes in **Philippians 3:20** that a Christian’s citizenship is in heaven. We should not long for the things of this earth, we long for a community, bound together with others in the kingdom of God. This is not just a heavenly reality. Church membership is the visible marker of what is true in heaven. We don’t have to wait till heaven to be with God’s people, we get that benefit to work together and bring glory to the King like we will for eternity, together. Each day, each week when we gather.

Paul is not finished. He now introduces more clearly a family metaphor.

Two – Family Members

Read Ephesians 2:19b-20

We already had a lot to give out this week so I didn't get them passed out but I have a document in the lobby that we use in our membership class that outlines why Membership Matters. It gives a wide summary but it says that church membership in the Bible is revealed in the identities and realities of the early churches. Paul wrote to Ephesus to this local church and to Colossae where another group of Christians gathered together as distinct groups yet united by the same king. God intends for us to be connected to Christians across the world but we operate in local churches to live out the Christian life. We see this in Acts as the church would grow in members as they counted the people who were added to their number and baptized. Each church would appoint elders over their church who didn't have authority over churches in other cities. Each church operates as a nuclear, or immediate family while connected to sister churches as relatives in a larger family tree.

As Paul shifted metaphors, from citizenship to household, we get closer to this family metaphor. He plays on the Greek word oikos which means both house and household members. Building and people. What Paul accomplishes with his play on words is that we see that the church family is a spiritual building and a people. This is far from the church being a building or a roster of names in a directory but is a living breathing household where each person is built literally stone by stone. This household doesn't set its entry requirements like a country club. The gospel and fruits of salvation set the entry into the household. If you have gone from death to life, alien to citizen, you are joined to the household and bonded to the foundation.

The foundation of the apostles teaching and the NT apostles which encouraged the church during the 1st century are laid with Christ, the cornerstone. His work during his life, death and resurrection coupled with his ministry today in heaven is the first stone laid of the church.

When a foundation is laid with stones, the cornerstone sets the stability and direction of the foundation. If it is anything but perfect, the walls will not be true but will be crooked and likely end in failure. Yet Christ is perfect.

There is a house that I pass every day on Grand and 7th street just north of Broadway. It has had a sign for over a year that it is a community project of

some kind. I thought they were never going to do anything to it but I was surprised a few months ago when they began remaking the foundation. They took out much of the old stone foundation and jacked up the house so they replaced probably 3/4s of the foundation with cinderblocks.

This is what happens to a church which makes it's own foundation. They teach a version of Jesus that they like and looks nice. They ignore or reinterpret the apostles and the scriptures to fit their ideal foundation and I am telling you it will rot. The only churches that will endure are those founded on Christ and the Scriptures which teach about Christ. That is not to say that the churches that are biblical will grow the fastest or the best, because you can bring a crowd with enough food. Am I right? No, endurance is based upon the perseverance of the saints into eternity. The test isn't numbers here on earth. The test is fidelity to Christ and Scripture and members who plant their stone in the household of God.

Submission to the Scriptures is one of the key pieces of what proves a Christian a Christian. If there is a dispute among us, scripture will be the guide. It is the scripture which defines how we build and live and arrange the church. It's the scripture which corrects and rebukes and guides how we live and operate not as individuals but as members of the same family.

Let's keep going. Citizens and Members as stones are forming a Temple.

Three – Family Temple

Read Ephesians 2:21

This house is growing. Not into a suburban 3 bed 2 bath with beautiful bay windows which look out over the golf course. We are growing into a temple. The importance of our growth and our unity are increased because of our purpose as a holy temple.

These mostly Gentile Christians never had access to the temple before but now they are being made into it. They are citizens of heaven, members of the household which has become the temple.

If you look back at verse 19, the word "saints" in the ESV is literally translated as, "holy ones". We are the holy ones, made into what v21 says is a holy temple. Unity around the scriptures, as a family of citizens and saints is secured by the holiness we are called to. Holiness meaning set apart for godly use. To be separate from profane or sinful things.

In **1 Cor. 6:19-20** Paul writes that because of the passions of our flesh we should not unite the temple that is our body with impurity like sexual immorality. The 1 Cor individual body temple metaphor is about purity. The Eph 2 corporate body temple is about unity. Paul teaches that both as individuals and as a unified church, we are to be holy. When you are worshipping on your own at home or praying on a walk, the Holy Spirit is with you as you pray and as you read the scriptures and share the gospel as an individual indwelt by the Spirit. But you are not JUST alone. You cannot miss this, for it would be to miss ½ and I might argue more than ½ of what God has intended for your worship. You are an integral part of the unity of the church as a temple together! Your holy purpose is connected with the saints!

We are the temple where God dwells, we are the place where God dwells with his family. We are further: growing into the family home.

Four – Family Home

Read Ephesians 2:22

Remember the theme of unity that Paul traces through this whole section. We are one in Christ and the implications of that extend to all the metaphors of our unity as a church.

God is not building holy hermits who have their individualistic faiths and lives. He is building a church. Our culture praises individuals and treats institutions or groups as evil. In contrast to this narrative, we cling to these truths that we are built together. The Spirit takes individuals, knowing exactly who we are and who we are meant to be, as we are placed into the structure of the family home. We are each given a personal relationship with God but it is by no means private or separate or meant in any way to be done alone.

Mark Dever – Yes, the Gospel gives us a personal relationship with God. But according to Scripture, that relationship with God includes meaningful relationships with his people. When we come to Christ, he folds us into a family – a family with actual flesh-and-blood, step-on-your-toes people.

You might wish today, or in the past that life would be simple without all those toe-stepping people. My contention to you today is that God intends your toes to be stepped on. If you will read this passage with me and submit to what the Lord has inspired through Paul to unify the church as a family,

then you must accept that your brothers and sisters will cause some bruised toes because we are human! We are meant to bruise a toe, forgive, and challenge each other to grow in holiness. I expect before too long I will bruise your toe or pride but please don't assume it's because I don't like you. It's probably because I meant to challenge you and said it in a way that wasn't as kind of gracious as I should have. You will learn that despite my mostly kind demeanor, I get up on the wrong side of the bed and step on a mega block and then send you an email about something difficult. But this is the process. I need you, and you need me.

Bring on the bruises and bumps. Bring on the hurt feelings and challenges as we worship, witness and work together. They are all intended by God to make us into the holy temple, a family dwelling where we, along with our brothers and sisters, are put together as members of the church.

Conclusion

Church membership sets the expectations and the relationships where the family grows. Its not without pain, yet it will not be without fruit.

Next week we will look at how our gatherings and our love for each other sanctifies us and prepares us for the day Christ will return. The process of being made holy.

Today we come together by the blood of Jesus because we were once strangers and aliens but now, we are citizens, members, temple and home to the family of God.

Unity here on earth is never easy. You have families related by blood which break apart because of tiny disagreements. Yet you have families which come together by adoption and mixed cultures and races which endure as they commit to one another.

The difference is a shared commitment to what a family is. The family that stays together isn't relying on their similarities or convenience. Those families break apart at the first sign of challenge. No, the families that endure look beyond the surface to the reasons they have been brought together. The church even more so.

As the church family, we must look to the Scriptures. We must look to Christ himself, to the foundation of our faith, who brought us together to

keep us together. It takes daily and weekly commitment. It takes humility, forgiveness and endurance. It takes gathering around the truth to keep us joined together.

When we gather tonight as a church, and next Sunday morning and evening to discuss why membership matters, I hope you come with Bibles open and with hearts committed to Christ and to each other. There is no other way to do it.

Lord's Supper!!!

The Church as Family

Ephesians 2:19-22

The Gospel produces a family who are built together in Christ and for God.

One – Family Citizens

Read Ephesians 2:19a

Ephesians 2:1-10

Philippians 3:20

Two – Family Members

Read Ephesians 2:19b-20

Three – Family Temple

Read Ephesians 2:21

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

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