

GOD

We Belong to the Household of God (Ephesians 2:19)

No matter what our previous background or history, when we confessed what it says in Romans 10:9 we not only got saved, born again, but we also became members of the Church of God, the Body of Christ, collectively making up what is referred to as the Temple, God's dwelling place. Consider verse 19 of Ephesians, Chapter 2:

Ephesians

2:19 Now therefore ye are no more (*no longer*) strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

We are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. This citizenship extends to us certain rights and freedoms that we can exercise while here on earth, but from God's perspective our citizenship is already in heaven, which will more fully be realized with the Return of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

According to this verse we are no longer "strangers and foreigners". This implies that there must have been a time when we were strangers and foreigners.

Let's go back a few verses to look at the context so we can more fully understand what this verse is telling us. We'll start in verse 11.

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;

The word "wherefore" here refers to previous verses, in which we find that we are God's workmanship, saved by grace through the faith of Jesus Christ. The people to whom Ephesians was addressed were admonished to remember how in the past, before they got saved, they were Gentiles, different people from the Judeans, those who were under the law, here called "the Circumcision". Because Ephesians can be applied to all born-again believers, those of us who are former Gentiles can apply these verses to ourselves, also.

2:12 That at that time (*before getting born again*) ye were without Christ, being aliens (*estranged*) from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

The "commonwealth of Israel" refers to the Judeans, who were God's chosen people. The word "commonwealth" is the Greek word *politeia*, which can be better rendered "citizenship". As Gentiles we were aliens, estranged, without that citizenship, and were strangers, or foreigners, to those to whom the covenants of promise were given. As a result, we were "without God and without hope in the world".

In contrast, the Israelites, as God's chosen people, were intended to reap the benefits of God's promises:

Romans

15:8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.

Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the Old Testament, the law. If the Israelites would have believed and accepted the righteousness that the accomplishments of Jesus Christ made available, that would have been the end of it: the Gentiles would still be without God and without hope. But God knew in His foreknowledge that Israel as a whole would not believe.

Let's back up a bit in Romans and take a look at chapter 10:

10:18 But I say, have they (*the Israelites*) not heard? Yes, verily, their sound (*voice*) went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

10:19 But I say, Did Israel not know? For Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by (*through*) them that are no people (*those not of your nation*), and by a foolish (*without understanding*) nation will I anger you.

10:20 But Esaias (*Isaiah*) was very bold, and saith, I was found of them (*by those*) that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

10:21 But unto Israel he saith, All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying (*contradicting*) people.

Even though Israelites did not believe, God knew in His foreknowledge that there would be Gentiles who would believe. So, by His great mercy and grace, God made it available for anyone to be saved, not just Judeans but also Gentiles, and all they had to do was to believe. Look back a few verses to chapter 10, verse 9:

10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

10:11 For the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed (*disappointed in their expectations*).

10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew (*Judean*) and the Greek (*Gentile*), for the same Lord is rich unto all that call upon him.

10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Let's return to Ephesians Chapter 2:

Ephesians

2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes (*once*) were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (*by his death and what it accomplished*).

The Gentiles were aliens and strangers, without God and without hope. They were "far off", but now through the accomplishments of Jesus Christ they also can become saved, becoming "nigh", or close to, God.

- 2:14 For he (*Jesus Christ*) is our peace, who hath made both (*Judeans and Gentiles*) one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us* (*these italicized words are not in the text – can delete*).
- 2:15 Having abolished (*done away with*) 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;

Before getting saved, people were either Judean or Gentile, but once born-again they are members of the Church of God, the Body of Christ, making up one new man with Christ as the head.

- 2:16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.
- 2:17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.
- 2:18 For through him we both (*Judeans and Gentiles*) have access by one Spirit (*spirit – new birth*) unto the Father.

Where originally there were two separated groups of people, the Judeans (the commonwealth of Israel) and the Gentiles, when we got born again, we became members of the Church of God, part of the Body of Christ, with peace and access to God.

Colossians

- 3:11 Where there is neither Greek (*Gentile*) nor Jew (*Judean*), circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

With this background, let's again consider Ephesians 2:19:

Ephesians

- 2:19 Now therefore (“*so then*” – *since we are saved and have access to God our Father*) ye are no more (*no longer*) strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

We were once without God and without hope, strangers and foreigners. The word “foreigners” in this verse is the Greek word *paroikos*, which literally means “outside of the household”. We’ll see this significance shortly.

Once we got born again, we are no longer strangers, ones who do not belong, ones who are outside of the household. We are now fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

A saint is anyone who is born again. The word translated “saint” is the Greek word *hagios*, meaning “holy one” or “separated one”. As saints, we have Christ in us, and we are members of the family of God, with God as our heavenly Father and Jesus Christ as our “big brother”. Because we are a family, we can dwell together in God’s household.

The word “fellowcitizens” in verse 19 is the Greek word *sumpolitēs*, which is used only here. This Greek word has the same root as two words that are erroneously translated “conversation” in the King James Version. If we look at those occurrences, we will get a better understanding of what it is to be a fellow-citizen.

Philippians

1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of (*pertaining to*) Christ, that ye stand fast in one spirit (*as one spiritually*), with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (*the family faith*).

In this verse, the word “conversation,” from the Greek word *politeuomai*, would better be translated “behavior as a citizen”. We are citizens and should behave in a certain manner.

Philippians

3:20 For our conversation is in heaven, from which we look for a savior also, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here, the word translated “conversation” is *politeuma*, which means “citizenship”. In God’s perspective, we have our citizenship in heaven.

We are citizens. By definition, a citizen conducts oneself according to certain guidelines of what they are a citizen of, and in return a citizen enjoys certain rights and liberties.

In our case as born-again believers who are citizens of the household of God, we are free, as it says in Galatians 5:1: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

We as citizens in the household of God also have five inalienable rights as God’s children (sometimes referred to as “sonship rights”).

As God’s children we are:

1. Redeemed – Ephesians 1:7 (“In whom we have redemption through his blood...”)
2. Sanctified – separated out from unbelievers as members of God’s family – I Corinthians 1:2 (“to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints...”)
3. Justified – Romans 4:25 (“who...was raised again for our justification” (when we were justified))
4. Righteous – II Corinthians 6:21 (“...that we might be made the righteousness of God...”)
5. We have the Ministry of Reconciliation – II Corinthians 6:18 (“...and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation”)

If we continue in Philippians Chapter 3 and also look at Chapter 4, verse 1 (which really should be a continuation of Chapter 3), we can see more about what it is to be a citizen in the household of God. Remember in verse 20 we found that our citizenship is in heaven, from which we look for a savior: we look with expectation for the Return of Jesus Christ.

Philippians

- 3:21 Who (*Jesus Christ*) shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.
- 4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

Philippians Chapter 4 verse 1 tells us to stand fast in the Lord. It has been shown that those who are “in the Lord” are those who are “faithful in Christ Jesus”, to whom the book of Ephesians is addressed.

Knowing this, let’s return one more time to Ephesians Chapter 2, verse 19:

Ephesians

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

Together, we are fellow-citizens with the saints. “Fellow-citizens” implies that we are not just “citizens” on our own, but the prefix “fellow” implies union or cooperation. We should stand fast together in the household.

The Greek word translated “household” here is *oikeios*, meaning “those of the house”. It is used in the context of believers in the family of God only here and in one other place in the Bible, in Galatians 6:10, where it says: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

More on how we are to live and act toward each other as citizens in God’s household is beautifully presented in several places in the Church Epistles, such as Colossians Chapter 3 verses 11 through 17, and Romans Chapters 12 through 15.

The next few verses in Ephesians Chapter 2 expand more on this household that we as members of the family of God are fellow-citizens of:

- 2:19b ...fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
- 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ (*Christ Jesus in the texts*) himself being the chief corner *stone*;
- 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord; (*collectively we believers in the Body of Christ are referred to as the Temple, God’s dwelling place*)
- 2:22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through (*in*) the Spirit.

This section of Ephesians we have just reviewed, from Chapter 2 verse 11 through verse 22, introduces “the Great Mystery”. Chapter 3 of Ephesians is actually a parenthesis that expounds on this mystery, which is neatly defined in Chapter 3, verse 6:

3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

We have seen that even though we were once aliens and strangers to God, without God and without hope, God, who is no respecter of persons, by His mercy and grace made it available for us to be saved, born again of His spirit, and to become His children. As members of the family of God, we are fellow-citizens with the saints in God's household, enjoying freedom and rights. God has truly blessed us with much to be thankful for.

- Dr. Rick Batt