**No Longer Strangers and Aliens**

**Ephesians 2:19**

**September 27, 2020**

1. Introduction
   1. Ephesians 2 is such a wonderful chapter in the Bible because it reveals to us how incredible it is to be a Christian.
      1. To be a Christian is to be made alive with Christ when you were dead in your transgressions and sins.
      2. To be a Christian is to be raised up with Christ to a new life.
      3. To be a Christian is to be seated with Christ in heavenly places.
      4. To be a Christian is to be saved by the grace of God.
      5. To be a Christian is to be the recipient of God’s infinite kindness lavished on you for all eternity.
      6. To be a Christian is to be the work of God in Christ Jesus.
      7. To be a Christian is to be united with other believers of every people, tribe, tongue, and nation.
      8. To be a Christian is to be reconciled to God in Christ.
      9. To be a Christian is to be a new creation living under a new covenant.
      10. To be a Christian is to have access to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.
      11. These are the ten blessings the Apostle has described to us just in Ephesians 2!
      12. To be a Christian is the most remarkable and wonderful and exhilarating thing in the world!
   2. The problem is that we too easily forget all of these benefits and blessings.
      1. It’s easy for us to be overwhelmed by the frustrations or the confusion or the problems or the thought patterns or the difficulties of life in this present world.
      2. It’s easy for us to forget who we are in Christ and what God has done for us.
      3. When that happens, we begin to look like the world.
      4. And the more we look like the world, the less we look like Christ.
      5. The Apostle Paul recognizes that the Ephesian Christians are engaged in a massive spiritual war, and, in that war, it’s easy to get bogged down, discouraged, or even to despair and lose hope.
      6. We have mighty enemies who are waging war against our souls, seeking to devour us, trying to pit us against each other and tear us apart.
      7. Satan’s strategy in the church is to divide and conquer.
      8. That’s why Paul urges unity and forgiveness in 2 Cor 2, and gives the reason why the church should be a unified, forgiving body when he writes in v. 11, **“So that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.”**
      9. We know Satan wants to divide us and destroy us.
      10. We know Satan wants us to be unforgiving and hard hearted.
      11. We know Satan wants to pit us against each other in the church and isolate us from fellowship.
   3. But we also know that we have a recourse against our own forgetfulness and the devil’s schemes: we have access to God the Father.
      1. We can come before God in prayer, and not only in isolation in our prayer closet, but together as the people of God, because we both, Jews and Gentiles, indeed all the people of God, we all have our access in the Spirit through the Son to the Father.
      2. God has provided an amazing way for us to manifest His presence on earth in the church, in the body of Christ, this new creation, and that is through the means of prayer.
      3. And the incredible thing is we all come to God the same way: through Jesus in the Spirit.
      4. And that means that we are all united in Christ because we all have the exact same access to God the exact same way.
   4. The fact that through Christ in the Spirit we all have this access leads Paul to a very significant conclusion as he closes this chapter.
      1. He says in v. 19, **So then…**
         1. Here’s the result of everything he has said up until this point.
         2. Here is the logical conclusion of all of these blessings, including the fact that we have access to the Father.
         3. Here is the truth that unites us all together as the new covenant people of God.
         4. Here is the consequence of being reconciled to God in one body.
      2. And as Paul begins to describe who we are as a result of all of these blessings, something incredible happens.
         1. He gets so caught up in describing and capping off how wonderful it is to be a Christian that he ends up giving us not one, not two, but three pictures of what it means to be the body of Christ on earth.
         2. They are three pictures that are loosely connected based on the context and the flow of the argument, but it becomes clear as we go that Paul begins to pile image upon image upon image to show us how glorious it is to be saved.
      3. If we are to manifest the presence of God on earth as God’s people in Christ, we need to know who we are; we need to know what we are.
      4. We need to understand where all of these blessings lead and what they all mean for us as the people of God, the church.
   5. Now, to show us who we are and what we are in Christ, Paul paints these three pictures for us; the first thing he tells us about who we are in Christ is that we are…
2. Citizens of God’s Kingdom (v. 19)
   1. The way the Apostle explains this is highly instructive.
      1. You notice how he arranges this statement: he puts before us both a negative statement about what we are no longer as well as the positive of what we are now that we are in Christ.
      2. I point this out because it is truly the mark of a good and sound teacher of God’s Word, as we know the Apostle modeled for us so remarkably.
      3. We need not only the positive statements that we all like to hear, noting what we are now that we are in Christ, but we need the negative statements as well that clarify the positive ones.
      4. We need both of these sides of the question so that we have great clarity about what the Spirit of God wants us to understand.
      5. Here then we see the masterful Apostle show us how stunningly gracious God has been to us to make us citizens of His kingdom.
   2. Paul begins by noting what we are no longer: strangers and aliens.
      1. This first term translated **strangers** is the Greek word from which we get our word *xenophobia*.
         1. Xenophobia, if you haven’t heard it before, means the fear of strangers.
            1. It’s typically used as a slur in the political arena for someone who has a different immigration policy than the person using the term.
            2. So even in our language the connotation of immigration and foreigners comes through in the term.
         2. The word in Greek was used to describe people who were foreigners, typically foreigners who were passing through rather than trying to settle down and make a life.
            1. These could have been people who were on vacation in a foreign country.
            2. Or they might have been people who were refugees but passing through one country to get to another.
            3. Perhaps the best way to think of this term in our context would be to picture people who have a passport to travel to your country.
         3. When you’re in this situation, you are the most removed from the life and protections of the country where you are traveling.
            1. If you get in legal trouble, you have no recourse unless your homeland has some kind of arrangement with the nation you’re visiting.
            2. If you end up in poverty, you don’t have access to any social services or medical care unless you have some friends in the area who willingly help you with your expenses and meet your needs.
            3. This category, then, is the most vulnerable person in a foreign country because they have no rights or privileges in that country.
      2. The second term, translated **aliens**, is a synonym of the first term but with a slightly different connotation.
         1. The word has the idea of a resident alien in a foreign country.
            1. If the first term described someone with a passport, this term would describe someone with a visa to be in the country.
            2. It was used to speak of someone who was legally present in a country and was granted a minimal amount of rights and privileges.
            3. For example, such a person would be allowed to purchase a home in the city and find a job to support themselves and their family.
         2. But they would not have the rights a citizen would have, especially in the legal sphere.
            1. For example, you remember perhaps when Paul was in Philippi in the book of Acts, the authorities commanded Paul and Silas to be beaten with rods (Acts 16:22).
            2. The next day, the magistrates sent their officers to the jail to release Paul and Silas.
            3. Paul objected to this cavalier treatment because he was a Roman citizen and he was beaten without a trial.
            4. Paul’s citizenship afforded him certain rights that an alien in Philippi would not have had.
            5. If Paul had not been a citizen, he would have had no recourse to appeal what happened to him as unlawful because the aliens who resided in Roman cities and provinces did not have such rights.
         3. What is fascinating about the ancient world was how many people found themselves in this category.
            1. The vast majority of people in Ephesus would have been resident aliens in the eyes of the law.
            2. According to some estimates, the city of Ephesus in Paul’s day would have had about 250,000 residents.
            3. Probably around 1,000 of those residents were actually citizens, and the rest fell into this category as resident aliens who had virtually no rights before the law.
            4. That doesn’t mean that the vast majority were born elsewhere and emigrated to Ephesus.
            5. Citizenship was not conferred on someone simply for being born in the city or the province.
            6. Many aliens had been born in Ephesus, and there was no shortage of corruption in the process of citizenship in the ancient world because of all the rights attached to it.
            7. For the majority of people reading this letter, the most they could ever hope to attain in this world was to be a resident alien in Ephesus, and they had to live their lives with some degree of uncertainty and fear of the authorities since they did not have the legal protections of citizenship.
      3. Paul, of course, is not talking about or even concerned about citizenship in Ephesus; he is talking about citizenship in the kingdom of God.
         1. And he says that there was a time when these Ephesians Christians were strangers to the kingdom of God.
         2. There was a time when they were aliens to the kingdom of God.
         3. He has already described that for us in v. 12, when he wrote…
         4. You formerly had no legal protection from the kingdom of God, no standing in the kingdom, no rights or privileges that come from being part of God’s covenant people.
         5. Some of them were strangers who had no interest in the people of God at all.
         6. And some were perhaps more like aliens with perhaps some interest in religion or curiosity about God but no formal relationship with Him.
         7. And we see that today that the vast majority of people fall into this category.
            1. They are outside the promises of God.
            2. They are not part of the kingdom of God.
            3. They are strangers to God’s promises.
            4. And I think even in the church today we have many who are aliens.
            5. They are in the church, but they are not in Christ.
            6. They have an external relationship with the people of God, but they are not actually in the kingdom of God.
            7. They set up shop in the church and even learn the language and some of the customs, but their hearts have never been changed and they have never pledged their allegiance to the King!
            8. And if they don’t repent and believe the gospel, when the King returns, they will find that He never knew them and will be condemned!
            9. Oh how tragic to live your life in the church as an alien to the people of God!
            10. How dreadful to spend your life learning the customs and language of the kingdom but never submit your life to the King!
            11. If that is you this morning, I pray you will turn from your rebellion and your sin and genuinely put your faith in Jesus Christ to save you!
            12. Don’t wait until the sermon is over, don’t wait until tonight, or next week, do it now where you are sitting!
            13. Trust Him! Trust Him! Don’t be one of the sorry folks at the end of the age who will hear the King say, “I never knew you, depart from Me!”
   3. If the terror of God’s judgment is not enough to move our hearts, look at the promise of blessing He gives in telling us what we are now that we are in Christ!
      1. You are fellow citizens with the saints!
         1. I want you to imagine for a moment that you are a first-century Ephesian.
         2. You are not a citizen of the country where you live, and where your parents lived, and maybe your grandparents, and where you grew up, and where you know the language and the customs and the practices.
         3. And you have no hope of ever becoming a citizen, always living your life under the precarious whims of an arbitrary governor.
         4. And now Paul comes along and says that if you are in Christ through faith, you are not merely a resident alien in the kingdom but you are a fellow citizen with all the saints!
         5. This declaration by the apostle would have been nothing short of shocking to the vast majority of his readers, for whom earthly citizenship was an impossibility.
         6. But that they should be citizens of heaven!
         7. Although earthly governors might reject them, the King of heaven has received them!
      2. We see this concept of being citizens of God’s kingdom in other places in the New Testament as well.
         1. For example, look at Phil 3:20-21.
            1. One of the things that makes this statement so powerful coming from Paul is that he actually was a Roman citizen.
            2. But he essentially renounces that and says that his citizenship is in heaven.
            3. His earthly citizenship is no longer important; it’s secondary.
            4. His real identity is found in heaven; the real place of residence where he belongs is in heaven, in the new Jerusalem.
            5. And while he is sojourning on the earth, he is waiting for the King to arrive who will exert His power to subject everything to Himself and manifest His kingdom on earth in glory.
         2. Look over at Heb 12:28-29.
            1. We are citizens of a kingdom that cannot be shaken!
            2. We are citizens of a kingdom that has an eternal, sovereign, omnipotent King, who is never up for re-election.
            3. It’s a stable kingdom, an eternal kingdom, a glorious kingdom, a kingdom that will encompass everything the King owns, which is every created thing.
            4. That is where our true citizenship lies, brothers and sisters, in this heavenly kingdom.
         3. Look with me at Revelation 1:6.
            1. Do you see that word **kingdom** again?
            2. He has made us – us! – to be a kingdom!
            3. And guess what!
            4. He has the dominion forever and ever.
            5. So in v. 9 John can say that he is a fellow partaker in the kingdom because he, like all of us, is a fellow citizen in the kingdom with the saints.
         4. Peter says something similar in 1 Peter 2:9-10.
            1. You are a holy nation, which to say you are a holy kingdom, brothers and sisters.
            2. You are citizens of this holy nation.
            3. You are now the people of God who have received God’s mercy.
            4. And that’s why Peter says in v. 11 that we are now aliens and strangers in this world.
            5. Why?
            6. Because our citizenship is no longer here; it’s in heaven.
            7. Our kingdom is no longer here; it’s in heaven.
      3. You need to understand the magnitude of your heavenly citizenship.
         1. The greater the nation, the greater the value of its citizenship.
            1. Why do so many people want to come to America and become citizens?
            2. Because of how valuable it is to be a citizen of this country.
            3. In fact, America might be the only country in history that its own citizens say they hate so much but refuse to leave even though they are free to do so!
            4. Why is that?
            5. Because people understand the value of American citizenship because of how great this country is on the world stage and in history.
         2. But listen to what God says about earthly nations, including ours: **“Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales… All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless”** (Isaiah 40:15, 17).
            1. Here comes America, strutting its stuff and puffing out its chest, and there God sits on His throne and says, “You’re nothing. In fact, nothing is actually more than you are. You’re less than nothing. You’re meaningless.”
            2. Paul knew that verse, and that’s why he could say in Philippians that his real citizenship wasn’t in Rome, it was in heaven.
            3. Because Rome was less than nothing in comparison to the kingdom of God.
            4. All earthly nations are less than nothing and meaningless because all earthly nations have an expiration date, but the kingdom of God is eternal and cannot be shaken.
         3. And brothers and sisters, you are citizens with all the saints of that kingdom.
      4. Now, here’s the question I want to put to you this morning: Does your life reflect that you value your heavenly citizenship more than your earthly citizenship?
         1. And with an election right around the corner, there is perhaps no better time to ask that question than right now.
         2. There is a certain level of concern we should have with what is happening in our nation.
            1. We know that because Paul tells us to pray for our rulers and those in authority in 1 Timothy 2.
            2. I’m sure Paul was obedient to that command and prayed for the salvation of rulers and prayed the rulers would make such decisions as brought an environment for believers to readily share the gospel of Jesus Christ.
         3. But think about the balance in Paul’s life and ministry.
            1. Paul was a Roman citizen, but how often do you find him talking about Rome?
            2. How often do you find him talking about the kingdom of God?
            3. Listen to how the book of Acts ends: **“And he [Paul] stayed two years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.”**
            4. There’s Paul, imprisoned in Rome, under house arrest, and the kingdom that consumes his thoughts is not the kingdom that has him in custody, unjustly by the way, but the kingdom that cannot be shaken!
            5. He preached not the kingdom of Rome but the kingdom of God!
            6. He was consumed with the kingdom of God.
            7. He was only concerned about earthly political issues inasmuch as they touched issues related to the kingdom of God.
            8. And sometimes, many times, in fact, they do.
            9. Sometimes earthly rulers try to get us to do things that violate the will of King Jesus.
            10. And sometimes earthly rulers or entire political parties try to further policies that look more like the list of sins in Romans 1 than the command to government in Romans 13.
            11. And we have a role to preach sin, righteousness, and judgment in the power of the Spirit, calling sinners to repentance and pleading with them to be reconciled to God.
            12. But the sad thing is that some of us are more bold to try to convince someone to vote a certain way than to try to convince someone to submit to King Jesus in repentance and faith!
            13. Which kingdom matters more, brothers and sisters?
            14. Which decision matters more?
         4. You might ask, “Well, what political party would Paul be in if he were alive today?”
            1. Do you want to know?
            2. I can tell you which party he would pick.
            3. The Monarchist party.
            4. No king but Christ!
            5. No king but Christ!
            6. Caesar is not lord; Jesus is Lord!
         5. Here’s the point, brothers and sisters: Do you realize the immense and infinite and eternal blessing you have of being made a fellow citizen with all the saints?
            1. Has it made you value the kingdom of God more than you value any earthly institution or state?
            2. Here’s how Jesus put it (you know this verse): **But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you** (Matt 6:33).
            3. What kingdom are you seeking first?
            4. What kingdom has your attention?
            5. What kingdom are you willing to sacrifice for?
            6. What kingdom are you willing to work to build?
            7. What kingdom are you seeking as the priority in your life?
            8. Are you seeking a kingdom that has an expiration date, or are you seeking a kingdom that can never be shaken?
   4. Look back for a minute at Eph 2:19 and notice that Paul says that we are **fellow citizens with the saints**.
      1. The word translated **fellow citizens** takes us back to when we were looking at Eph 2:5-6 and saw all the things that God did for us with Christ.
         1. Here the idea is that God has made us citizens not merely as individuals, but that we enjoy this citizenship together with other believers.
         2. It’s another word that indicates our unity in Christ.
         3. We are citizens together because we have been made citizens as this new humanity, as this one body, and so we all collectively enjoy this citizenship in God’s kingdom.
      2. And notice that this citizenship is something we enjoy with the saints.
         1. Some people have taken that to mean the angels, but the angels are nowhere to be found in this verse or in the context.
         2. Others have said that this means other NT believers only so that this kingdom is a NT kingdom of God that has nothing to do with the OT kingdom.
         3. But a better way to understand this is that we have been made citizens of God’s kingdom with all of God’s people throughout all of history.
            1. If you look with me at Hebrews 12:22-24, you’ll see why this makes the most sense of what Paul is saying.
            2. These terms, Mount Zion, the city of the living God, and the heavenly Jerusalem are all kingdom related terms.
            3. In fact, as we saw earlier, the goal of this passage is that we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.
            4. Notice that in this heavenly city, in this Mount Zion, in the city of the living God, in this kingdom that cannot be shaken, we find not only the believers who lived after the resurrection of Jesus, but we find all the saints throughout all of history.
            5. We know that because Hebrews 11 was right before this where many the saints from the Old Testament had their faith put on display for us to see and understand.
            6. We are now in one kingdom with them, one heavenly city, with everyone whose name is enrolled in heaven, including the spirits of the righteous people from Hebrews 11 who have now been made perfect in heaven with Christ.
      3. As if it wasn’t overwhelming to think of the immense blessing of being a citizen of God’s kingdom, we are reminded here that this citizenship is something we enjoy with believers throughout all of history.
         1. And there aren’t tiers here.
         2. There are no second-class citizens.
         3. We all enjoy an equal citizenship in the kingdom because we didn’t purchase our citizenship; Jesus did.
         4. And His perfect righteousness and perfect sacrifice is the reason all the saints are indeed saints, holy ones.
         5. It’s certainly not because we have the right to be called holy in ourselves; it’s only through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.
         6. How incredible is it to think that we are citizens in this kingdom with people like Daniel and David and Abraham and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Elijah and Elisha and Ruth and Esther and Deborah!
         7. How wonderful is it to be part of the kingdom as full citizens with Paul and Peter and James and John and Mary, Jesus’ mother, and Mary and her sister Martha, and all the NT saints who demonstrated such love for Christ!
         8. Brothers and sisters, these are our people, our countrymen, those who share in the same kingdom we share in!
         9. And they all, through faith, received testimony from God that they were pleasing to Him!
         10. And we get to be in that company, that company that worship and praises and obeys the Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns over all as our glorious King and Savior.
3. Conclusion
   1. I think one of the most difficult things about preaching this message in our context is that many of us enjoy citizenship is this great nation.
      1. I’m thankful to live here and for the rights and freedoms we have in this country.
      2. But it’s also possible that in a certain way the glorious light of our heavenly citizenship might not seem as bright because we are distracted with our earthly citizenship.
      3. But imagine not being a citizen, and having no rights, and no privileges, and no protections, and being at the mercy of a wicked ruler who could determine your life on a whim.
      4. And then this glorious message comes to you that you are a citizen of the heavenly kingdom under the reign of King Jesus.
      5. How clear would it be to you that King Jesus is all you have, and all you need!
      6. That’s as true for us today as it was for the Ephesians nearly 2000 years ago.
   2. Brothers and sisters, I pray this doesn’t happen because of how God has used this nation for the spread of the gospel, but our earthly citizenship could all be gone tomorrow.
      1. Nations come and go.
      2. Empires rise and fall.
      3. But His kingdom stands forever.
      4. That’s where our citizenship lies.
      5. We are no longer strangers and aliens, but every believer in Jesus Christ is now a fellow citizen of God’s kingdom with the saints.