

No more strangers ... but fellow citizens (i) (Quality: Very good)

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Date: 27 April 1975

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[0 : 00] as the Lord may be pleased to help us shall we turn again to the chapter which we read the second chapter to the Ephesians and the 19th verse is upon our mind and we hope in our heart the 19th verse the second chapter to the Ephesians now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God it's a good thing to be reminded of what we were that we might feel there's some evidence that there's been a change and change there must have been if we can come in with the first verse and you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins what a change from death unto life and a saving knowledge for by grace are ye saved so the apostle he's speaking now as he writes to the Ephesian church they were Gentiles by nature and in religion they were idolaters and they had their idols many particularly one and many were seduced by those idols but grace had reached their heart and they now were instructed in this great and important matter that they were in Christ Jesus and that they were God's people not merely a nation as the Jew was but they were a people whom the Lord had chosen for himself and had been given to Christ and Christ Jesus was all their salvation and before we get to this point of what we were there must be in our hearts some desire if we are interested really in the matter because it can be possible with us and some of us know what that is we've always had a bit of religion and we've always followed mentally shall we say after the truth but the word of God is quick and powerful so at some time we hope it has been with us that that word has worked and come to us in such a power that it brings us into again the first verse and you as he quickened the word has entered with power and authority and the concern then comes with that one so receiving the word whereby he will say what am I and where am I the chapter says you're quickened if you're one of his quickened into life it says also that you're saved and not by your works

you may have had many we have had works when we were young and perhaps before we made any profession out of the truth we had some work going on but it wasn't saving but this work is not saving but it's grace that works and it works with a quickening power and so we read through the chapter it's a wonderful chapter for it's well known to us but we do want to feel the operation of it for a quickening friends means there is there is birth there is life and that which was not now is oh yes but our text will have us to consider what we were and then to work in our minds we hope has there been a change has there been something added has there been something renewed has life come where there was death and so he says does the apostle the Ephesians and you have it quickened but friends it's on record today it's a personal chapter when the spirit applies it we can leave the Ephesians they're gone but we know this that this same God who quickened these Ephesians into life must be our God otherwise we are still in our heathenism and idolatry and carnality and sin and death but he raised up his people he had a foreknowledge of them he had chosen them every one of them and they're not quickened into life because they've become religious no they're quickened into life and they become godly and they know this godly and they seek after this godly whereas it says in the twelfth verse at that time ye were without

Christ being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenant of promise having no hope and without god in the world but now now the change has come in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off and made nigh by the blood of Christ great mercy friends indeed to have a right understanding and a right knowledge there's plenty of religion in the world of a sort that in this chapter we have given to us a true religion friends that even the nations do not keep them apart they could be Jews they could be Gentiles but they're one in Christ and so we have not to consider nationality we have not to consider family relationship what we have to consider is this are we have we been brought nigh by the blood of Christ have we a desire a concern to know that our redemption is precious and we feel the preciousness of it feel the preciousness of it feel that indeed the Lord had taken notice of us when we were strangers but here we have in this nineties verse now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners my how it goes how it pulls us to pieces friends strangers strangers strangers foreigners how necessary to know our real state then before

God because this is not our national concern no it's concerning that which we have later in the chapter it's a building it has a foundation it has apostles and prophets but it has Christ in it and Christ is the foundation stone and the building must be fitly framed together and every stone will be quarried out of nature and it will be made to fit it won't fit itself it will be brought to fit every stone one to another upon this one foundation and it is the mystical body of Christ nothing less than the mystical body of Christ so that seeing the building is so important and so seeing it is so real as being an eternal building then it should be our concern and will be under the power of the spirit to know how we stand whether there has been that change in our heart and life think of it were strangers might have sat out of the way

Sunday after Sunday might have been bold enough to repeat the scriptures and might have been bold enough to argue on the line of doctrine but it's hard to realize we might have been strangers what to strangers to God's truth strangers to the power of his grace in our own hearts strangers friends well what do we know now friends ah that's the point have these strangers been taken up by God himself yes yes the blessed spirit takes up those who were strangers to the saving knowledge ah that's what we want friends the knowledge of scripture is good but the saving knowledge of the scripture is salvation and that salvation is the eternal work of the holy spirit and what is more friends the strangers from all eternity were never reckoned to be strangers to continue as such but the

[11 : 24] Lord will bring these strangers to a knowledge of himself and to know themselves before God so that we can say then in later days no longer strangers but fellow citizens with the household of God our text is very complete is it not when it speaks of what you were and what through grace you are it's a wonderful text and surely there's enough illustration in it of nature and of grace for us to understand by the spirits teach him now therefore and we read before that in the 18th verse through him we both have access by one spirit unto the father then there must have been something of a wonderful introduction introduction you know a stranger can be introduced the names are mentioned and you say well now we're no more strangers

I think we've met before and so look how wonderful if the Lord by the blessed spirit you're introduced as it were or is it brought to your knowledge and you're no longer strangers that names have been exchanged you've no more name to hang in than that you're a sinner you haven't gained any title for these things you might in life you might have been entitled in life friends but that will die with you but to be given the knowledge of what you are a stranger and then to be called one whom the Lord has made himself known to you so that you are no more stranger you you know him he's spoken to you in your very soul names have been exchanged friends no title other than that you were a sinner but he was the

Lord of life and glory and brings through the Holy Spirit the knowledge of himself a saving knowledge so that you're no more strangers no more strangers then there must have been a time in our life friends when things could have been mentioned religiously scripturally and we could have not answered we've been strangers then if it had been brought to us do you love the Lord or no are you his or are you not you couldn't have answered you're a stranger you're a stranger but the work of grace having brought into and unto you then the answer you're no more strangers than foreigners because the Lord would not have his people in that estrangement no he's chosen them for salvation they're his they're in the covenant of grace and not only they never knew it but they had no concern about it it's not yet been made manifest a stranger the God that rules over all the earth friends the God of salvation to the church the God of mercy a God of all grace to many in religion is a stranger they worship him as the

Ephesians did as an unknown God unknown God is God it is true but he's not known to them they're strangers but here we have some hope there are for a year no more strangers there could be such a change for him as for this strangeness to be taken away and that intimacy brought with love with authority with grace with eternal reality into your heart so that you can say through mercy that he's your God he's your God and he gives you grace to know this and to carry out and to live in that which he's doing for you all his work friends it's the

Holy Spirit work you remember the Lord said regarding the shepherd that the porter opens to let the good shepherd in what does that mean well the Holy Spirit lets the shepherd into the fold he doesn't climb up some other way he doesn't follow the bent or line of a natural clergy or anything like that but the Holy Spirit appoints him and opens the door to him and so those who are in Christ the same porter the blessed Holy Spirit brings Christ opens the door yes and is brought into a sinner's heart and they welcome him for they're no more strangers the work of the blessed spirit friends we must have that we don't want we can't have a religion without the Holy

[18 : 08] Spirit there's plenty of natural religion that the spirit gives life he's the third person in the trinity he fulfills the purpose of the father and of the son and of himself a triune God enters your heart friends when the Holy Spirit opens it and breaks down and removes all the strangeness yes true real intimacy union yes that is that what this is life birth all that you can think of friends that is away from being strange the unity of the spirit is alone the spirit were now therefore ye are no more strangers so friends we have to be reminded that's what we were oh yes we may have been many years religious we may have for many years carried a bible a hymn book but we may have been strangers to the love of

Christ shed abroad in our own heart by the Holy Spirit but friends there is also this love of God which is a great power heart of salvation and removes all the strangeness all the strangeness how we in the course of life as we enter into union how the strangeness is removed and love takes its place how wonderful that is and then when that's real as it should be friends and this love is real for it's the eternal love of God it enters with power and authority no longer strangers friends no no you go to the Lord and you tell him all your case and you're conscious that he knows it before you speak to him he knows the work going on in your own heart he knows whether it's his or whether it's your own but he will have you know this that there's a union that exists between his people and himself no longer strangers there's another point too comes out here and foreigners and foreigners another nation friends sometimes we are proud with our nationality and we think our language we think everything that we have is better than the foreigner but these are brought to be one friends no longer foreigners one nation one language friends and also there's a particular peculiar nature with them as being one nation one in

Christ friends one in Christ which means this that you can converse with one another that was a solemn business but overruled by God when the men set out to build the tower of Babel what took place the Lord confused the language and the confused language friends proved them to be foreign one to another let the word of Christ dwell in you richly says the word if that dwells in you richly then the church of God is one in Christ and they are no longer foreigners they are of the same language yes they may speak oughtnly they may not always have a good vocabulary but nevertheless their understanding is this that they know the word of

God with a power unto salvation it works in their hearts and they are no longer foreign to God's working now that's a great point isn't it because the Lord was good to us when in unregeneracy for there must be a been a time if you were a regenerate soul when you were unregenerate that is I'm taking it that you have some concern with these things and having been quickened into life you are concerned about that life and that life is in Christ Jesus and was in him and with him before ever your natural life was wonderful to think of it before you was known before

I was known in this world as anything or anybody known to Christ the love of Christ must be brought and the realisation must be known and a birth must be made manifest and the nationality declared and what is that one in Christ Christ's own mystical body has been the church of God who are no longer foreigners no longer foreigners I know many in religion they wouldn't want to listen to me this morning they would say what's the old man talking about I'm no foreigner to the word of God I've carried my Bible and studied it for many years so they might have done but you see those that are born into

[24 : 51] Christ it is Christ's life born in them and the language is given yes sure enough wherever a man is born what nation that's the language he takes up it is his natural or what we term his mother tongue and our mothers taught us as well as they could so that we were not foreign altogether to the English language that friends here is the word of God the life of God in the soul the child of God been born again and his hopes are built upon the foundation of Christ Jesus and his life is his with Christ in God but now he's set free friends he's not foreign to the truth that he's a sinner oh friends what a knowledge that is what a knowledge that is as children we might be brought to knowledge the first time of our own nation we might have been proud of it or otherwise but what a knowledge when it's brought to us first that we are hell deserving sinners and that we may be able to say prayers and we might then be brought to him we used to sing as children

I often say my prayers but do I ever pray or do the wishes of my heart go with the words I say I may as well kneel down to God to wood and stone as offer to the living God a prayer of words alone well friends what is prayer that to come before God not as a foreigner no one who knows the lisping language of the child of God the one who knows his want and need and helplessness one who feels that everything that belongs to God is out of his reach it is true he may be enjoying the mercies of God in natural things that knows nothing of the mercy of God in salvation he's still a foreigner but there must be this that can be registered as a real change friends as a knowledge as life in the soul as being able to speak to the Lord as knowing him as your

God and as your saviour he's made it known to you he's proved to you what you were by nature that your religion natural religion didn't save you that what you profess naturally didn't save you but he's come forth he's convicted you of your sin then led to Jesus blood and no longer a foreigner no longer a foreigner there's another point we detect do we not from time to time when we're travelling someone who might be a foreigner and there's plenty about today and they inquire the way and strange to say when they ask the way they can hardly make you understand what they mean so foreign they are to the language and to the part where they're travelling they seek help yes and they want to know the way because they're foreign we should be the same or are the same if we go out of our own country but here he's been brought into their own country think of that friends that you were foreign when you were born into this world to the things of

God to the reality who God is you heard you embraced your parents religion perhaps in the knowledge of it in the head that you were foreign to the feeling of it to the power of it your parents talked of the power of God unto salvation and what they felt you believed they were true but you didn't feel it in your soul you were foreign to it but when the Lord takes you up when the Lord visits us with this salvation with this saving knowledge of himself when he visits us then he makes known to us our helplessness our ignorance our unbelief yea he strips us of all fancied religion and fancied notions yes of foreign then another thing friends perhaps we went so far as to be able to talk to religious people talk to the people went to chapel and so on but there's something and so far as you got there you had to leave all you couldn't enter into the language feeling saving me well

I lay these things out it's in our text friends because this is what we've got to come to if there's a change then there must come this but but fellow citizens with saints and of the household of God think of that what a change brought right to real and true citizenship having your right lawfully legally under the spirit's teaching under the power of God with the true knowledge of God in salvation a fellow citizen with the saints saints mind you friends not just religious people but those who have been set aside as God's people they are his saints you may not be able to call yourself a saint nor

[31 : 53] I myself we feel far from it but the point is this if you're in Christ Jesus if you're in him you are a saint he he doesn't embrace an unsaved sinner only if he takes him in it is to save him but he will not leave him the very taken up is to remove that which is foreign and that which is not of himself so that he gives life he takes them up that is they're saints they're saints so it's a great work friends there are many we know they like to add the st as if they are something saint this and saint the other but friends sinners yeah sinners saved by grace sinners no longer strangers no longer foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of

God now that brings it right close doesn't it the household of God where God's people are found where God's people mix and mingle together where the Holy Spirit draws them together the household of God that is God's household God the Father yes God the Father God the Son and God the Holy Ghost what a wonderful household and what a wonderful citizenship but nothing less for do friends this is God's word yes this is what you were when you was out of these things you was without this knowledge you couldn't claim any citizenship and what's more you wasn't concerned about it and certainly you was far from feeling or any concern to be one of

God's people a saint of the household of God no your heart your mind your soul was in the world and not in this household wonderful word but you see our text is a solemn blessed but needful reminder yes plenty of religion and we can take to it in our early days like a duck just to the water but when it comes to the time of testing when the Lord comes forth if he's our God if he has chosen us for salvation then our text is useful to us helpful to us because we begin to realize our strangeness how foreign we are to the real things of God how far off by wicked works and far from being citizens well we are more in the world than in the church of

God and as for the household do we ever sit at the table do you ever sit at the table friends why don't you sit at the table this is the household of God hasn't he brought you now hasn't he shown you you were a sinner hasn't he brought you to feel at home with the people of God and you don't boast of this of yourself no it's because he has spoken to you and put a desire in your soul that you might be one of the household of God oh the glorious invitations of the gospel I say invitations they are but it's the spirit's work friends it's not man's we don't invite people to give their heart to Christ he doesn't want such a heart he breaks hearts he takes them unto himself and he makes them fellowship to have this fellowship and he brings them feelingly to this household it's often you might say they are my best friends my kindred well their

God my saviour reigns great mercy isn't it all the work of grace but how we must be shown our real state in the sight of God and who can show us it but the Holy Spirit himself who can take the things of Christ but the spirit did not the Lord say to his disciples I will send the Holy Spirit a comforter and he will guide you into all truth and he will take the things of mine and he will show them unto you now the revelation of the Holy Spirit is the greatest gift in true religion for he takes the things of Christ yes the Lord himself he left his disciples but he left them in the hand of the comforter and he was going to show them the spirit was the things which

[37 : 51] Christ has said and what it meant and with the Holy Spirit friends there's power there's life there's authority so a God given religion friends is that which the Holy Spirit works and whilst that doesn't work you will find you're in the household of God amongst God's people and when your time is clear you come where God's people are and you can't embrace the world for really the world has never embraced you you had to part long ago with those things that the fellowship fellow citizens with the saints and the household of God all speak of the change of heart change of desire and the want is in your soul and that means it must be real because it's going to be a building we're not trespassed now into the 20th verse but it's to be a building friends it's not just to be a collection of people built upon the foundation of

God what God does he does eternally friends he chose a people for himself that was to be his building it was to be known on earth yes it was to be registered in heaven and it was for heaven that this building was set up wonderful so that that earthly part friends must be well understood yes there's many people you know they're in heaven before they know they're on earth before they realize the degradation in one measure of being on earth our sinnership learnt upon earth and heaven people talk about it talk about going to heaven well it's the best place they can think of if they die so they're going to heaven no one chooses the worst place but friends this is a building and what we've been speaking of trying to is the work going on in the heart of those as they were in unregeneracy though the

Lord had chosen them to be built and fit the frame together that is why you see there must be one man wish one must be one saving knowledge there must be one reality as we stand before God what is that we're either in him or we are out of him we are either loved of him or we stand still and still are under his wrath this were not do the Lord has called you and you're no longer foreign you're not foreign are you to these things and if so be your concern would be a fellow citizen and be of the household of God these are mercies friends they belong to the chosen vessels of mercy they are for those who are fitly framed together to grow unto an holy temple in the

Lord this is all important friends because the day in which we live I feel there's very little real religion there's so much that is of a profession a head knowledge but not a saving knowledge oh when we are acquainted with those who have gone and been called home and we believe they've gone to glory with Christ then it makes us think perhaps more seriously more earnestly where do we stand and before we get there we must be in the 19th verse we must know what we are there's many they're built they think they're building themselves really but they would not do now therefore there's a change ye are no more what you were you know more than what you thought you were not that it is the reality of God's work in your soul the

Holy Spirit give you life bringing you back to the first verse you have he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sin that's the knowledge of God of what we were and he has a knowledge of what we are now friends and if his knowledge is towards us he is making us concerned he's given us a feeling he's given us a want to know these things for ourselves so that the grace that he gives us saving me that we might grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to be foreign to be foreign to these things well we might trespass I've said that word now look the foreigner you might say look you mustn't go in there you'll be trespassing he couldn't read the notice no there was a warning not to trespass but in trespass and friends perhaps when we were foreigners we trespass yes you're trespassing the word of God you're trespassing into a profession but the

[44 : 30] Lord's found you out and he's not destroyed you he's not executed you no he's had mercy upon you he's shown you your error he's proved to you what you really are he's forgiven your sins and you lived in that hope and do now it's his grace that saved you that grace the sovereign work of God the unmerited favour of God for that is grace it's come to you you're no longer a stranger and a foreigner you can speak the language without trespassing you feel you know a little of what he's said to you and what he's done for you you enjoy the fellowship of his people and the church of God God and the household of God and being

God's household friends it would never be dissolved no it would never be dissolved he's taken them one by one to heaven and there they'll enter more fully into those things proving their citizenship and their union with God in Christ now therefore ye are no more strangers you were but you're not now no foreigner no you know him whom to know is life eternal we leave it there this morning amen