

# No more strangers or foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints. (i) (Quality: good)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Now therefore, here are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

What a change had taken place in these people blessed with the grace of God at Ephesus.

The change was marked. They made a clear indication of it. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read of their burning books that had been their whole occupation, but now they no longer require it.

And it may be that some of you would understand something like that when the profound change took place in you, that there was a burning of books.

A burning of books. So that it was manifested what God had done in the soul.

[ 1 : 45 ] That which you enjoyed before, you now had no relish for. Undoubtedly, the grace of God was very marked in its operation in the church of Ephesus.

We go back to the Acts of the Apostles to discover the great worship that was engaged in the worship of Diana, the great goddess Diana.

How wonderful that there should be the power of God manifested that should turn devout people from heathen worship.

What power there is in the grace of God that turns people, even in our day, from heathen worship. Our land today is to a large extent given up to heathenism.

And if those people were brought upon, undoubtedly, there would be a profound change. You may perhaps say, and fear in your own case, that having not gone to extremities, that the matter is not so clear.

[ 3 : 10 ] But you are not allowed to go to those outward depths of professed heathenism and worldliness.

Even so, God shows us what is in our hearts. And there will certainly be some of God's people who have never been away from a regular attendance of the house of God, but will be able to bear a witness that they felt heathenism in their own carnal minds.

They have felt worldliness working in their own carnal minds. So then, they too, in their measure, would know the Spirit if they did not know that in what we might call a more literal sense.

Now, in the words of our text, the Apostle says, Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners. This directs our attention to a change unquestionably.

The opening of this chapter begins, As you doubtless are well aware, And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

[ 5 : 05 ] These are important points because if we can trace these things having been in us, we shall the more clearly and comfortably be able to trace the change that has been affected.

So then, can we discover that in our lives when we've walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

Sometimes, there is the temptation that we never knew anything about this at all. But God is able to prove it.

And God proves what we are by nature by showing to us at times, only for a brief period, but nevertheless, in reality, that our nature is according to the course of this world, that our nature is according to the prince of the power of the air, that our nature is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

And now and again, this may be forcibly felt through the mercy of God. It may never develop into fruitfulness, but nevertheless, we are aware of what we were.

[ 6 : 48 ] And so God, by his grace, has made a change. And that change, surely, is the giving to us eternal life, blessing us with and being partakers of the divine nature of the eternal God.

We shall therefore discover that God who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us. Do we know anything about God's riches in mercy?

If you talk to many people, they will not understand the need of mercy. They will not understand the experience of mercy.

They may indeed go so far as to bless God for the blessings bestowed upon them, for the success that they have enjoyed in life, for the comforts that they have in their home and surroundings and family and so on.

But, when it comes to observing that God who is rich in mercy, there is a silence. Would there be a silence with us if reference was made to our giving thanks unto God for his great mercy, acknowledging that God is rich in mercy?

[ 8 : 22 ] And it is because he is rich in mercy that he had a great love toward us, and because he had a great love toward us, so he loved us, and the result of this was that he saved us.

Now, the love of God is wonderfully set before us here, even when we were dead in sins. God loved his people all the time.

God does not begin to love his people when there is a change, and this is where what we call Arminianism is entirely undermined.

Arminianism will never speak to you about God having loved you before you loved him. It is from their point of view their work.

They have decided for Christ. But how wonderful and glorious is the truth which the apostle sets before us that his great when he speaks of his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins.

[ 9 : 45 ] Now, that period may vary in people's lives. Some are brought to the knowledge of God in their childhood, and others may continue into their teens and into their early life, but some have continued to old age before God has quickened them into life.

But let's all remember this, that whether quickened or not, God loved them, has loved you and has loved me, long before we ever knew God.

where even when we were dead in sins, and God's eye was upon us all that time, may we review it, whether the years were few or many, and if there be many, perhaps we may have a greater and deeper sense of the mercy of God that he watched over us all those years when we had no knowledge of God, we had no desire after God.

and yet to reflect upon it, how great is the mercy of God, how humbling is the thought that all those years he loved us, the love of God is eternal, and therefore we are loved with an everlasting love.

Now everlasting in relation to God goes backwards as well as going forward. When we are blessed with eternal life, then it is a life which has a beginning in its manifestation and it has no ending.

[ 11 : 41 ] But the love of God to his people has no beginning and it has no ending. We cannot comprehend this, but nevertheless faith believes it and faith glories in it.

How wonderful that God, that God should love his children even when we were dead in sins, given up to idolatry, given up to worldliness, given up to passions, given up to the course of this world, being a willing servant of sin and Satan, and yet with regard to the election of grace, God loved them.

Oh, it is a very humbling thought and a reason for us to worship God when we think upon this sometimes, to think that those years when we wanted not God, had no desire after God, but God loved us.

Now, is this true? Can you in your own conscience answer? It is true. He loves me now, but he has loved me always.

And this will surely bring us down to the ground in weeping, in astonishment, in amazement. And therefore he says in our text, ye are no more strangers and foreigners.

[ 13 : 13 ] Ye once were, and elsewhere he tells us that 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.

How many people are in that condition today? Having no hope, without God, and without God in the world. that is, without the true God.

They have a God. Many people, all people, in one way or another, worship God, even if it is the worshipping of themselves.

But they depend upon something. They depend upon someone. And whatever we depend upon may be said to be a God.

How sad, how solemn is that state which is referred to here, having no hope, and without God in the world, being strangers from the covenant of promise, being unaware of the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[ 14 : 41 ] Are we strangers to these things? Let conscience tell us, a tender conscience tell us, are we strangers to these things?

If we should be, oh, that the Spirit of God might quicken our souls and engender in our heart a fervent desire to know them. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners.

Therefore, that is, to the covenants of promise, and to the hope of the people of God. What is the hope of the people of God?

But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes are far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, and so on.

What a change, therefore, takes place in our view of things. May we bless God this morning if Christ is set before us the hope of glory, the only hope of glory, if Christ is set before us as the one thing needful, if Christ is set before us as our Saviour and our Redeemer, now therefore ye are no more strangers than foreigners.

[ 16 : 14 ] How beautiful is the language of Scripture. It speaks so clearly, it speaks so definitely, it speaks so pointedly.

You see the apostle looking at these people at Ephesus, he does not say, raise any question about it. Did he see that the effect of the Spirit was so clear?

Could he look back, doubtless he could, to the time when they were without God, without hope in the world, and now can he see such an effect or change, that he can write to them in these conclusive terms, now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners.

And you know, if we are to be strengthened, if we are to be encouraged, as we go along life's journey, must we not endeavor to speak in these same terms, but now ye are no more strangers and foreigners, or to be delivered from the situation which places a reserve.

I know sometimes we may feel deeply disturbed, there is such a thing as coldness of spirit, there is such a thing as being in the clutches of the devil, there is such a thing as backsliding in our hearts, all of which may sometimes make the saint of God stand as it were and ponder as to whether after all they have made a mistake, but nevertheless let us look back to the beginning, let us look back to that clear change which we can remember was brought in this one and that one, and may we therefore say now, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

[ 18 : 14 ] We are either fellow citizens with the world, or we are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. We cannot be in both companies.

The Lord Jesus in his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, he said ye cannot serve God and mammon. Ye cannot be in two companies, for either ye will hold to the one and hate the other.

We cannot serve two companies. And therefore we cannot be fellow citizens with the world, and fellow citizens with the household of God.

We have to mix with the world. We have to do business with and in the world. This is necessary to us.

And the Lord himself said, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil thereof. The evil thereof is noted in the earlier part of this chapter.

[ 19 : 29 ] Now the fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of faith will feel a difference within.

There are certain things that we all have to do. Certain businesses that we have to attend to. But how do we approach them?

What is our spirit in dealing with them? Are our eyes up under God? Do we seek that the Lord will direct our steps during the day?

Or in accordance with the spirit of the world, do we make our own plans and are determined that these plans will be fulfilled whatever happens?

now if we are blessed with the spirit of grace and are with the fellow citizens, with the saints and of the household of God, we shall at times hear the words which are and the instruction which is brought before us by James.

[ 20 : 56 ] Wherefore, go to now ye that say today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain, whereas ye know not what you'll be on the morrow.

For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that.

But now ye rejoice in your boastings, all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not to him that is sin.

Now you see, here is one point in respect to our being of a settled mind that we are the fellow citizens of the fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

We are made conscious that it is if the Lord will, we do this or that. Such statements or expressions are not without feeling.

[ 22 : 22 ] We say such things if we are in a right spirit because we love the Lord's will and we know that he must do that which is right.

If things come across your pathway that prevent your accomplishing certain things, is this to prove that you are a fellow citizen with the saints?

will your eyes be open to observe that this adverse situation is in love to your soul?

We do not always know that which is good for us. Therefore, God knows and because he knows, he brings something across it.

Maybe for a few days, a few weeks, or even a few years. Because sometimes things are good, but not at this time. And therefore, we have to wait patiently.

[ 23 : 41 ] But these things only serve to prove that we are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. We have a record of the lives of the saints of God in the scriptures and, of course, a record of some of the wiki people.

We can therefore look at these records and be attracted to them. David's life, for example, how many cross-currents hindered his progress.

Some of us can perhaps sit down and imagine what he felt when being called from the sheep coat, sheep fold, and anointed to be king over Israel.

Israel, he would think that he was there. He didn't know how God would bring it about, but it couldn't be more than a few days or a few months, and it would easily develop, but what happened?

Something in the region of 13 years elapsed, with a great deal of trouble, persecution, his life in danger, before God's promise was to be fulfilled.

[ 25 : 13 ] But what was he proving? He was proving, and God was proving too, that he was a fellow citizen with the saint, and of the household of faith.

God proved it. it is striking for us to realize that one or two occasions when Saul, King Saul, was in the power of David, and yet the power of God kept David.

Now, therefore, you are no more strangers than foreigners. Foreigners to the keeping power of God, strangers to the keeping power of God.

Peter tells us, kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Now, are we fellow citizens with the saints, because we know something about the keeping power of God?

Even with respect to the Lord's anointed, how often we may say, well, Saul was a wicked man. David had every right to take advantage, but he didn't.

[ 26 : 40 ] There's a great deal of instruction in this matter in the scripture. As far as David was concerned, King Saul had been appointed king by God, and therefore he wouldn't touch him.

He was the Lord's anointed, touched not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. We need to have a care in these things, do we not?

And so David was instructed. David knew that the time would come when being condescent with the covenant of promise, he would develop it.

Vengeance is mine, I will repay. Now that is the language of the fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

They're willing to leave the matter in God's hands. Now this is not to encourage dilatorless, it is not to encourage us in a lack of right duty.

[ 27 : 58 ] But, if there is an indication that God has appointed any person, whether he is proved wicked or subsequently, then, since we believe that God has appointed, we must wait until God removes.

this is a very different spirit to the spirit of the world, isn't it? God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform, he plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.

Now, those that are the fellow citizens with the saints into the household of God are blessed with the fear of God. We may say that in connection with our last point.

Though he was kept by the power of God, yet David was also possessed of the fear of God. He realized the value of the fear of God. Our lives are moved, controlled, by the fear of God.

God. That is a principle that God has communicated that has affected our consciences so that we're not able to do the things that we would have perhaps done without the blink of an eye.

[ 29 : 26 ] The fear of God. The word of God speaks to us about this. It is the beginning of wisdom. The beginning of wisdom with the people is when they cease to be strangers and foreigners, but become fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

so then they have wisdom. And the fear of the Lord is to depart from evil. And it is an unctuous light to all that's right and a bar to all that's wrong.

But there's another aspect of the fear of the Lord. And that is, it shows to us that we have a deep feeling for and respect to God.

the affection of children unto their father. And this is the privilege and blessing of the fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

You notice that there is fellowship with the fellow citizens and it is a family fellowship as they are referred to as the household of God.

[ 30 : 54 ] Now the fear of the Lord, does it affect you? And does it affect me? Is there that which is in our heart which when certain things come along our nature may readily say yes and then the fear of the Lord will quietly say no.

And if you have that experience then be assured that there is that given to you which brings you within the compass of the fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

When you speak to the saints of God, those to whom you are united through Jesus Christ, you can speak about the points I have mentioned and they will be received.

and they will be accepted and you will feel so. And thus the will of the Lord will be observed and thus the power of God will be known and thus the fear of the Lord will be understood.

Are we therefore blessed with a clear knowledge that we are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God because we understand fully and are united to those people who speak about the will of God being performed, the power of God being felt, and the fear of God working in our hearts here is a union.

[ 32 : 42 ] Therefore you will know that you are a fellow citizen with the saints and that you are amongst the household of God. But then the language of the saints and of the household of God is so different from the language of the world.

our spirits will often be nauseated, sickened with the emptiness of the language of the world.

We may have to endure it sometimes but God knows what goes on in our hearts. God knows what sadness is upon our spirit and their laughter is as the crackling of thorns under a pot as the proverbs tell us and how true that is.

Now who can tell what you feel but God? Who can understand what you feel but God and those that have felt like you? But let us come to the other side of things.

Fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. What should be the conversation? What is the desire of the fellow citizens and the household of God, the saints of God, what is their desire in respect to conversation?

[ 34 : 19 ] Another of the epistles tells us this, our conversation is in heaven. Our conversation, our satisfaction in conversation is in speaking about Jesus Christ.

And here again, we are troubled because there's a world within as well as a world without. And our heart pats sometimes for conversation, heavenly conversation, gracious conversation.

God knows the heavens and the sighs because of the power of sin working in us. But what a relish when Jesus leaves the psalm.

What a relish is felt in the soul when we are able to speak of the glory of Christ. We are able to think upon the mystery of his love, the mystery of God and as God manifests in the flesh.

How blessed when we feel the power of his own resurrection moving in our hearts so that we are lifted above the things of time and we understand those precious words in the Colossians as being a reality in our experience.

[ 35 : 48 ] if ye then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God set your affection on things above not on things on the earth.

Now God looketh at the heart. People may misjudge us. They cannot understand.

They cannot know. Even the people of God sometimes cannot know. The groans. My groaning is not hid from me. And this groaning may sometimes be occasioned because of our cleaving to the dust.

But here is that which makes the fellowship of the saints possible. They are risen with Christ. And therefore there is a desire to seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Their desire is to speak of a living Christ. And he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Their desire is to rejoice in his death.

[ 37 : 02 ] As well as his resurrection. Yea, can we go further to his intercession. He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

You know, one of the distinguishing features of the eternal God is that he lives. And he lives eternally. Other gods have no life in them.

we may perhaps say or make an exclusion here that Satan the god of this world has life in him but how he is restricted how he is restricted and he will know eternal death but the people of god will know eternal life that is they know god the only true god and jesus christ whom thou hast sent therefore if we look at these precious truths which were so evidently set forth in the church in ephesus be about fellow citizens with the saints into the household of god the desire of their hearts will be to speak of jesus christ to sing of jesus christ and in their souls to behold the lamb of god time and time again how good if we could trace this desire in our soul as we open our eyes in the morning oh that we might behold the lamb of god today and as we come to the end of the day that we might give thanks that we beheld the lamb of god that taketh away the sin of the world the lamb of god that was offered upon calvary as an acceptable sacrifice and see the glory of the types and shadows of the ceremonial law centered and fulfilled in the lamb of god even jesus christ in heaven the lamb is in the midst of the throne with conversation on earth as the fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of god will meet it will be as they have the lamb in the midst of the throne we may meet privately we may meet congregation only it's when the lamb is in the midst of the throne that we shall know that we are no more slaves and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of god the language is the same and therefore we may also say that the custom is the same the custom is the same what is the custom of the people of god in everything gives thanks for this is the will of god concerning you the custom is the same what is the custom then i may have said before case of a godly man who was wondering sitting wondering and suddenly the words came upon his spirit be not forgetful to entertain strangers for some having entertained strangers have entertained angels unawares and

whilst he was thinking upon these words a knock came at the door and he went to the door and there stood a man that he had never seen in his life before and the situation was such that the man wanted admittance and this the owner of the house he was a bit diffident but these words thundered in his ears be not forgetful to entertain strangers and on the ground and foundation of that he invited him into his house and he sat down and he wasn't sure what this man was or who he was or even where he come from and because of the weakness of the flesh the man the receiver hoped that his visitor would go before the time for a meal but no the man still sat there he still sat there so why did he want him go before he had a meal because it was his custom to seek the

Lord's blessing and how would he stand before this man anyway the man still stayed and there was nothing for it they had to prepare a meal and so they sat down and the man of the house he said well friend he he he he he