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Ephesians 2:11-22:

We're Members of God's Eternal Household

- I. Brought Near by the Blood
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Ephesians 2:11-22

Dear Friends in Christ,

Some years ago a fellow by the name of King Duncan wrote: "We live in a world that canonizes celebrity. It no longer matters how much a person has accomplished or how much they have contributed to society. All you have to do to become famous in today's world is to keep yourself in front of the media."

I confess, I don't know who the most famous celebrities are today, and I can't say that I care. What's chilling about celebrity, especially today, is that so many will listen to them, follow their thinking. And, as is the case for everything that becomes dust, they will be swept away.

And then there's us. Would you like to know where we stand? Paul writes, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...(v.19)." That's a wonderful truth, isn't it? In Christ we are God's beloved children.

I understand, for us poor, miserable sinners trusting in Jesus...well, sure...we're dust here. But because of Jesus . . .

WE'RE MEMBERS OF GOD'S ETERNAL HOUSEHOLD

I. Brought Near by the Blood

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh (before we knew Christ)...remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world (vv.11-12).

Think about that. To be "separated from Christ" is to be "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel (i.e., the church) and strangers to the covenant of promise." You know, it's to be eternally homeless! "The covenant of promise" is "whoever believes (in Christ) has eternal life (Jn.3:16)." It's "the free gift of God (Rm.6:23b)" to those who believe. Without Christ we belong to nothing more than what we can scrape out of this world, only to spend eternity in wailing and gnashing of teeth!

Have you ever heard someone say, or have you ever thought, "It doesn't make any difference what a person believes as long as the person believes in something"? Can you tell me, who or what is the god called "something"? I'll tell you who it is: It's whatever a person thinks or feels. It's the person! What kind of comfort is it when you don't know what awaits you on the other side of the last breath?

Here's the comfort: "But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ (v.13)." And you know why we were far off: sin. John impresses upon us, "sin is lawlessness (I Jn.3:4)." The Scriptures are clear, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rm.3:22b)." But here's what aggravates everything: We are still sinful and will struggle with sin until the day we die. However, as John writes, "You know that (Jesus) appeared in order to take away sins, in him there is no sin (I Jn.3:5)." That's where our faith takes us. To Him!

The 13th verse of our text ties everything together: "But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." From the Book of Revelation are the words of this song for us: "...for you (this addresses Jesus) were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them (this includes us) a kingdom of priests to our God (Rev.5:9-10)." This is who we are: "a kingdom of priests to our God." As priests we offer the sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving and service to Him who forgives our sin through His blood and grants citizenship in His eternal Kingdom.

Doesn't that change the importance we place on the things and doings of this world? Do you recall these words of the early church father, Chrysostom: "Men are nailed to the things of this life." Well, Christ was nailed to the Cross for our sin and whoever believes is lifted to the things of eternal life. And look at what else our text says . . .

II. Peace

For he himself (Christ) is our peace, who has made us both one (that is, Jew and Gentile) and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility... he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near (portions of vv.14-17).

A fellow by the name of Jerry W. McCant wrote:

In a world filled with causes for worry and anxiety, we need something tougher than "positive thinking" or even "possibility thinking." We need the peace of God standing guard over our hearts and minds.

Well, we do need the peace of God. We constantly sin against God. We constantly offend the Lord by our lapses into unspiritual behavior. We commit the same sins over and over. Not willfully... most of the time...but we do as a result of our fallen nature. And our fallen nature never makes sin okay! The most horrible thing that could happen to us is if Jesus would say, "I've had it! I don't want you. I don't want you in my presence." But He doesn't. He's that close to us. Again: "He came and preached to you who were far off and peace to those who were near."

You surely remember that moment when Peter asked Jesus, "'Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?'" Isn't that generous? Forgive a person who sins against me seven times? Hey, let's face it, there are instances where some of us won't forgive a person who sins against us but once, and even that with reluctance. And Jesus said to Peter, "'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times (Mt.18:21).'" You don't keep a record; you simply forgive! And attached to that Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Let's put it this way: "Forgive us in the same way we forgive others."

We need to remember, in the midst of our lifetime battle with sin and the innumerable sins we commit, the words God gave to Paul are always there: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rm.8:1)." This is what is impressed upon us in the written and spoken Word and the visible Word of Baptism and The Lord's Supper.

Finally this . . .

III. Members of God's Household

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom, the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (vv.19-22).

I find those to be some of the most comforting and meaningful words for our walk through this world. Everything here is being twisted, turned, torn beyond recognition. It will pass away. But what we have in Christ is eternal and is now! "... (we) are (right now) no longer strangers and aliens" to the things of God. We are right now "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." In Christ we are forever members of His household!

I wonder if any of you remember the names Robert Conklin or David Kunst? In 1979 Conklin published a book entitled *How to Get People to Do Things* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979). The following excerpt might sound familiar to some:

“David Kunst left a surveying job and his wife and three children in Waseca, Minnesota, to do what no individual had previously accomplished. He and his brother, John, set out to circle the globe on foot.

“John...died two years later, when the brothers were ambushed by Afghanistan bandits. David, shot in the chest, survived. He resumed the world walk. The trek was completed about four and a half years after it started. Why would a man slice out a chunk of his life to spend in such a desolate ordeal?

“The answer might be found in these words of his: ‘I should have been a movie star (or) something. I like fame. I mean, I’ve got to admit it, I just enjoy having my name in the paper...’”

Do you remember David Kunst? Have you heard of him? Do you even care? In spite of all the desire for worldly recognition and a place among humanity, it all passes away. Forgotten. Who cares?

But for those in Christ...well, that’s different. We can say with King David, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Ps.23:4b).”
We’re Members of God’s Household - forever!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott