

The Household of God

Ephesians 2:19-22

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Introduction:

Almost all of you have experienced the pain of rejection at some time or another...

- Some of you have known on much deeper levels than others, but you have all known it in some way or another.
 - Rejection is painful to us because we were not made to live in isolation.
 - God made us to live in families, in households, in which there are different members who love and serve one another in joyful companionship.

Sometimes we don't think about it, but the original family is the household of God.

- Long long before we were even created—in fact, from all eternity—God has been One God in three persons—
 - God the Father has a Son, and God the Spirit proceeds from God the Father and God the Son...
 - From all eternity, these three have lived together in perfect love...
 - Each has delighted in the other, and each has found His highest joy in serving the other...
 - The Father gives all things to the Son and to the Spirit,
 - And the Son always obeys the Father and does what pleases Him,
 - And the Spirit always obeys the Father and the Son.
 - There is no envy, no power struggle, no contention...
 - Each has His place and each is perfectly content with his role.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to live in a house like that if you could really be a part of it!

- By “really be a part of it,” I mean if you could be changed so that you would be capable of living in a home like that...
- You wouldn't want to go there as you are now—with all your selfishness and pride—you would ruin it...
 - But wouldn't it be wonderful if you were changed so that you could live in a house like that,
 - changes so that you could really and truly love all the other members with a perfect love that was not in the least strained or reluctant,
 - and also to be in that house a person who brought nothing but pure delight to all the other members of the household?

- How wonderful it would be if you could live in the very house of God itself—
 - with God Himself as your Father who would always love you with a perfect love...and whom you would always love with perfect love...
 - and with Jesus Christ as your brother...
 - and with the Holy Spirit as your helper!
 - What perfect bliss it would be!
- Well brothers and sisters, you who are trusting in Jesus Christ,
 - I have good news for you...

I. You are already members of God's house!

- What Paul says of the Ephesian believers is true of all of you who believe:
 - Eph 2:19: "Now therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."
- A. It was not always true...
 1. He says you are **no longer** strangers and foreigners...
 - If you are "no longer" strangers and foreigners, that means you once **were** strangers and foreigners.
 - Paul is writing to these Ephesians who had received life through Jesus Christ—
 - but who had once been without Christ and without God in the world...
 2. He has already told them what they were before they received life...
 - Look in Ephesians 2:12...
 - We looked at this a couple of weeks ago—
 - I showed you that it speaks of the condition that we were all in as Gentiles before Jesus Christ came:
 - Eph 2:12: "That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."
 - It was not simply an exclusion from the privilege of being in God's house,
 - It was an exclusion from the least ray of hope...
 - It was to be under the wrath and curse of God as one destined for eternal misery under His judgement.
 - It was a most dreadful condition, and it is the condition of all those who are outside the covenant that God has established with His people.

- That is the condition that we were all in, and that is the condition that we all fully deserve to be in still!

B. And so what a marvellous thing to be told that you have now been brought into God's house!

1. You are just as fully a member of this house as any other member...

- Once you have come to Christ,
 - you are a fellow citizen with the saints, having all the rights and privileges...
- You are just as fully accepted, beloved, and cared for as every other son and daughter in God's house...
 - You are actually made a joint heir with God's Son, Jesus Christ.
 - There could be no better relationship than this!

2. What a change it is!

- On the outside, it was cold and brutal and unprotected...
 - But in the house it is warm and safe!
- Outside, you had no direction, no purpose, no help...
 - but inside, you have your wise Father's counsel and grace.
- Outside, you had no one to really love you...
 - but inside, you are loved with an everlasting love that totally envelops you.

3. Just think of it!

- From an outcast, to a member of God's own household with God Himself as your Father!
- It is truly inconceivable!
 - It is inconceivable that a mere creature, though sinless and spotless, should be brought to live as sons in God's house!
 - How much more that *sinful* creatures, ruined and lost in desperate rebellion, should be redeemed and brought to so high a privilege!
 - We might well say with John,
 - 1 John 3:1: Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

TRANS> What a marvellous thing Christian!

- You are a member of God's own house!

- Some of you are thinking,
 - “Well yes, but I have not been changed to live in this house as you described...”
 - Of course you haven’t—I will get to that later on...
 - But you have already been brought into this house...
 - And what a house it is!

II. In this house, you have the most sure foundation!

- Ephesians 2:20 says that you have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone...”
 - With such foundations, the house of God cannot fall.

A. There are many great houses that fall!

1. What has become of the house of Pharaoh, perhaps the most powerful man in the world when Joseph was in Egypt?
 - What has become of the house of Nebuchadnezzar, one of the greatest, most powerful kings who ever lived?
 - There are many great houses, but these houses do not have foundations that stand.
 - They have their enemies from within and their enemies from without...
 - Soon they are overcome, the foundations crumble and their houses perish forever.
2. But Jesus said that His church would never fall...
 - a. In Matthew 16, when Peter first confessed that Jesus was the Christ,
 - Jesus replied,
 - “You are Peter (which means little rock) and upon this rock (this kind of rock) I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”
 - We have very strong enemies that will try to destroy the church,
 - even death (or Hades) itself will try to keep us from serving God...
 - It will try to keep us shut up in the grave forever...
 - But even death will not prevail against the church...
 - Jesus Christ has conquered death... He has overcome the grave... and in Him, we are assured of victory.
 - Nothing will be able to keep us from living in God’s house.

- b. Oh yes, there are individual congregations that will fall—
 - Jesus threatens that He will cut them off—that He will remove their lampstands when they refuse to repent.
 - That means that He will take the gospel away from them and cause them to wander about aimlessly in the dark.
 - Rather than remaining as believing churches where people are established on the sure foundation by faith,
 - they will become unbelieving churches where the members are estranged from Christ.

B. But just what is this foundation on which we are built?

1. Paul says it is the foundation of the apostles and prophets...

a. An apostle is one who is officially sent...

1) The apostle's rank depends on who it is that sends him...

- Jesus is **the** Apostle (of the highest level) because He was the One God sent from heaven...
- The twelve apostles are **the apostles** because they were sent by the direct commission of Jesus Christ.
- Other apostles such as Barnabas, or even missionaries today are apostles of a lower rank because they have been sent out by the church according to the directives of Jesus.

2) The apostles referred to in Ephesians 2:20 are the apostles who were sent out directly by Jesus Christ to establish His church.

- To them, it was given to understand who Jesus was, why He had come, and what His will is for the church,
 - and then to leave the church an inspired record of His life and what it means to us.

b. The prophets were those who were also given understanding of Jesus by divine revelation,

- and were also used to tell us about Jesus and His saving work and how it applied to us...
- The prophets spoken of here are the prophets of the New Testament...
 - Luke would be an example of such a prophet.

2. But how is it that we are built on these apostles and prophets?

a. Well, it is in this—

- We become members of God’s house by believing in Jesus Christ, right?
 - But just what is it that we come to believe about Him?
 - It is the testimony that God has given us concerning His Son—
 - The good news He came from Heaven, became flesh for us... that He has offered Himself on the cross for our sins, and that the Father has accepted His sacrifice for us and raised Him from the dead and that whoever believes in Him will be saved.
 - That is the gospel that God has testified to us.

- b. But how does the testimony of God about His Son come to us?
 - 1) It comes to us through God’s Word—the Bible...
 - And where did the Bible come from?
 - It was given to us by the apostles and prophets that Jesus Christ sent and enabled to proclaim the gospel to us!
 - We are to believe what they have written about Christ because what they have written is God’s holy Word.
 - That is why God’s house is said to be built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets.
 - It is built on the testimony that they have given to us of God’s Son.

 - 2) This is exactly what Jesus was talking about with Peter in Matthew 16—
 - What we looked at a minute ago when Jesus said
 - “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church.”
 - Jesus was calling Peter Peter (which means rock—He usually called Him Simon)
 - because Peter had just made the confession in Matthew 16:16 that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
 - When Jesus heard that, He told Peter that flesh and blood had not revealed that to Him, but His Father in heaven!
 - Peter was a rock because he was receiving revelation from heaven...
 - Peter was showing himself to be a recipient of direct revelation from God!
 - And so when Jesus says,
 - “You are Peter” or “you are a rock and upon this rock I will build my church...”

- He is saying “upon this kind of rock I will build my church.”
- What kind of rock is that?
 - The kind of rock that receives direct revelation from heaven about Jesus and who He is...
 - That is the kind of rock that all the apostles and prophets were—
- That is what the church (or God’s house) is to be built upon!
 - It is built on the infallible testimony of apostles and prophets to whom God has revealed His truth by direct revelation...
 - Ordinarily, God gives His truth to us by illumination—he opens our hearts to believe what is written in His Word...
 - but Peter and the other apostles and prophets of the New Testament were given this direct revelation upon which the church was to be founded.
 - And brothers and sisters, after the foundation was once laid, there is no longer any need for direct revelation...
 - That is why those who claim to have direct revelation today look like monkeys trying to imitate the apostles and prophets...
 - Try as they might, they simply cannot perform the signs wonders that were given to the apostles.
 - These false prophets stand in great danger of God’s judgement...
 - For God does not deal lightly with those who claim to speak in His name!
 - He declared that anyone who claimed to speak in His name as a prophet and had but one failed sign or prophecy was to be executed!
 - God’s Word is not something to be trifled with.
 - It is something that God asks us to entrust our very eternal destiny to and He wants you to have full confidence in it.
 - That is why He gave clear signs to mark out those who were gifted to speak His Word,
 - These apostles and prophets are the very foundation of God’s house!

- It is by their words that we know everything we know about Jesus!

C. But there is something more to be emphasised here about this foundation!

1. Jesus Christ is said to be the chief cornerstone of the house... not just the chief stone of the foundation, but the chief stone of the whole house—upon which all is built!

- You see how verse 21 goes on to say,
 - “in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord...”
- Everything rests upon Jesus and His work!
 - The apostles and prophets are the foundation only in the sense that they give us all that we are to believe about Jesus Christ in His word.
 - They declare Him to us as the only Saviour,
 - the source of our salvation, the foundation stone on which the whole house rests.
 - We rest on their testimony,
 - and their testimony is a testimony about Jesus, the Cornerstone.

2. Now just exactly what the word “Cornerstone” means here is a matter of much debate...

- but the one thing that is sure is this...
 - Everything in the house is built with reference to this one stone.
 - He is the One who unites and sustains all the members of the household.
- a. If you speak of what we are to believe,
 - it is that Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone, is the Son of God—that God has given us life and that this life is in His Son.
- b. If you speak of how we are to live,
 - it is that we are to obey this Cornerstone,
 - to be imitators of Him who obeyed the Father even to the point of going to the cross,
 - and to love one another as He has loved us.
- c. If you speak of our worship,
 - it is worship that is offered to God in the name of this Cornerstone,
 - and the content of our praise is praise for God’s acceptance of Him,

- and our preaching is of Him and His cross...
 - and the sacrament is to be received in remembrance of Him.
- d. If you speak of government,
- it is government under the headship of this Cornerstone...
 - the officers of the church are to meet His qualifications for office...
 - members are to be received upon confession of His name and obedience to Him...
 - and even family government is to be the discipline and nurture of this Cornerstone.
- e. If you speak of the hope of God's house,
- it is hope in the sacrifice and intercession of this Cornerstone,
 - hope in His finished work,
 - hope in His promise to return,
 - hope in His declaration that He will crush the serpent's head.
- f. And if you speak of the house's defence,
- this Cornerstone is our strength and our protector...
- g. And if you speak of the house's mission,
- this Cornerstone is the one who sends us into the all the world to preach His gospel...
 - He is the one who gives us the message and who is the message...
 - He is the One who promises to go with us and in whose name we baptise all those that believe.
 - He is the One who gathers in His elect to fill up His house.

TRANS> You see that Jesus our Cornerstone is the whole foundation—everything depends on Him!

3. Oh my friends, there is no other foundation for this house!
- a. If you are just bopping along on your own—
- if you are not resting upon Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins—
 - if He is not your Lord whom you obey and follow...
 - then I have hard news for you...
 - You are not on the right foundation...

- You are still outside this house!
 - And unless you repent and come to Christ,
 - you will perish in your sins.
- b. I myself was baptised an infant... I was outwardly connected to the house, but it was not until I was about 20 that I came to truly rest upon this precious Cornerstone...
- Before that, I believed that He existed and I even believed that He was the Saviour,
 - but I did not build my life upon Him as the Cornerstone...
 - and that was obvious because I did not follow Him—
 - I was still going my own way...
 - You are not really resting on Him as your foundation if you are still committed to going your own way!
 - As He Himself said,
 - “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”
 - It was not until I at last gave up on my own way and turned to follow Jesus (and to trust in Him alone for my salvation) that I became a true member of God’s house.
 - Oh yes, I was connected by my baptism, but only as one of those to whom He would have said at the last day,
 - “Depart from me, for I never knew you...”
 - I was an intruder until I became a true son...
 - And so are you unless you are built upon Him as the chief cornerstone.
 - Every stone that is truly in God’s house is fitted together in Him...
 - It has its life, its shape, its direction, its salvation from Him alone as He is revealed to us in the Word of the Apostles and Prophets.

TRANS> Are you in this house?

- Be sure that you are no longer a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow citizen, built on Jesus Christ, the sure foundation.
 - I tell you, if you are built upon this foundation,
 - You are built upon a house that can never fall...
 - If you are built upon Him, you cannot sink unless He sinks first...

- and He will never sink, for He is the Son of God.
- So if you believe, you are already a member of God's House,
 - and in this house, you have a foundation that is firm and sure...
 - and next I want you to consider that...

III. In this house, you have a most glorious future!

A. In verse 21 and 22, you are told that the future of this house involves growth, and that in two ways.

1. First, in what we might call numerical growth...the addition of new members.
 - a. That is the growth spoken about in verse 21...
 - The picture here is that of the Lord taking stones and fitting into the structure.
 - Verse 21 says that He is fitting them together—He is taking them from outside and adding them to the structure,
 - something like you do when you make a lego house—you fit the pieces that are scattered together into one structure.
 - 1) But there is one difference from the lego house...
 - The lego pieces are already the proper shape—
 - all you have to do is add them on...they have the little bumps and the little cylinders that fit perfectly over the little bumps...
 - But when Jesus finds His stones, they are not at all fit for God's house.
 - They have to be fitted together.
 - 2) Two things are involved before a stone can be added—
 - a) First, He has to cleanse us from the guilt of our sins.
 - Because we have sinned, we are under God's wrath and curse, and Jesus has to wash us in His blood...
 - In other words, He has to apply His sacrifice to us for our forgiveness so that we can be accepted of God and not condemned.
 - b) Second, He has to cleanse us from the pollution of our sins...

- To change us so that we will want to live in God's house, so that we will want to be free of our sins, so that we will trust in His saving work.
- This is the cleansing of the Holy Spirit by which He changes our hearts so that we come to follow Him and to believe.

TRANS> This double cleansing has to be applied to each stone to fit it before it can be added to the building.

- We are not at all fit when He finds us, but He fits us and adds us so that the temple grows.
- The cleansing of each stone is represented by baptism.

b. Numerical growth occurs in two ways...

1) First, it occurs as Jesus sends His church into the world to make disciples of all nations.

- He has commanded us to do this until the end of the age.
 - We are to be out in His name gathering stones for this temple...
- We are to tell them that through Jesus Christ, they can receive the forgiveness of sin and new life they need to be a part of this house.
 - And if they repent and believe, we are to baptise them and receive them into the church.

2) Secondly, numerical growth occurs when we have children.

- We are to baptise them, train them up in the Lord, and pray for them so that they will turn from their sins and trust in Christ alone for their salvation...
- It is a sad thing that many churches have grossly neglected the training up of covenant children...
 - This ought to be a primary means of growth in the church.

3) In fact, every congregation ought to endeavour to have numerical growth in both ways...

- There are some churches that neglect evangelism, and some the neglect the nurture of covenant children.
- We ought to endeavour to have both, and pray to the Lord continually that He will give us both...
 - We want to see Him add to His glorious church, fitting those stones one by one to His holy temple.

TRANS> But I told you that numerical growth is the first kind of growth...

- The is also another way in which God’s house is to grow...
2. There is spiritual growth, or growth in grace and maturity.
- a. This kind of growth is referred to in verse 22 when Paul says to the Ephesians,
 - “in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”
 - You see, the Ephesians to whom Paul was writing had already been added to the church...
 - but the present continuous tense is used to here to say that they who had already been added were being built together...
 - In other words, they were becoming more and more sanctified, more and more what God wants them to be...
 - They were growing in grace.
 - b. We have seen that Jesus does some serious shaping when each stone is added, cleansing them from guilt and corruption...
 - but you know good and well that we have not yet made perfect!
 - Conversion is a wonderful change in that it brings forgiveness and changes our whole direction from rebellion to obedience, from delight in sin to delight in God’s law...
 - but it is not enough!
 - If there were no more growth after conversion, we would be entirely unfit to live in God’s house forever!
 - We would bring in our selfishness into God’s house and ruin the whole atmosphere!
 - What hope would there be of us being perfectly pleased with our brothers and sisters and of being an unmitigated blessing to every one of them as I spoke about before?
 - We can’t even get along perfectly with our own spouse and children as we are now!
 - The encouragement is that God, who has changed us greatly in bringing us to Christ, is still at work in us to bring us to perfection.
 - If this is all that God was going to do to change us, heaven would not be heaven at all!
 - No brothers and sisters, He is still at work in us and we are all growing.

TRANS> So you see that there are these two kinds of growth—numerical growth and growth in grace...

- the future of this house is one of growth.

B. The words of verse 21 and 22 also show us what we are growing into...what the house of God is becoming...

1. There are two ways that our glorious destiny as God's house is described.

a. What are they?

1) In verse 21 we are said to be growing into a holy temple in the Lord...

2) and in verse 22, it is said that we are being built into a dwelling place for God!

3) Now these are the same thing!

- Everyone knows that a temple is the dwelling place of God...

- So when Paul says we are growing into a holy temple and then says we are being built together as dwelling place for God,

- He is just saying the same thing in two different ways.

b. Now this is a very high privilege that Paul is describing here!

1) He is not simply saying that we will be able to go into this temple where God dwells,

- but he is saying that all who are founded on Jesus Christ actually are the temple where God dwells!

- We ourselves are becoming the house where God dwells!

- He has always dwelt with His Son, and now we are becoming an additional part of His dwelling place.

2) And I should point out that the word translated temple in our English Bibles refers to the sanctuary itself where God dwells—

- It is the translation of the word *naos*.

- The temple complex was referred to as the *hieron*, but the *naos* was the inner sanctuary of the *hieron*.

- We are being made into the holy place that was represented behind the veil and that only the high priest—one man from one tribe—could enter once a year, and then only with a sacrifice!

- We not only get to enter this holy place now...

- We are actually destined to become this holy place where God has chosen to dwell!

- 3) This speaks of an incredible intimacy we are given with the most high God!
 - Through Jesus and His cleansing blood, we actually become the inner sanctuary where we have intimate communion with God!
 - We become His very house!

2. Brothers and sisters, what does this mean for us? What does it mean to be God's dwelling place?
 - a. First of all, it means that we get to see Him—to live with Him as our papa!
 - 1) Brothers and sisters, we will be able to gaze upon His beauty—the glory of our God in all His perfections...
 - As the Psalmist says:
 - Ps 27:4 One *thing* I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple.
 - We will see His holiness and purity!
 - We will see His wisdom!
 - We will see His power and might!
 - We will see His pure justice!
 - We will see His love and grace!
 - We will see His majesty!
 - Day after day, we will be dazzled by His glory and beauty!

 - 2) We will also be able to fully experience His love...
 - Again, as the Psalmist says:
 - Ps 36:8 They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.
 - We will live under the shower of His gracious gifts and smiles and favour!
 - He will fill us up with good things.

 - 3) I feel helpless to describe it all!
 - We will be bursting with joy and gladness before Him for all eternity!
 - Again, I will let the Psalmist speak:

- Ps 65:4 Blessed is the man You choose, And cause to approach You, That he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Of Your holy temple.

b. Secondly, it means that we will be led by Him as our Father...

1) What a blessing it will be to have His clear directives about how we may live in His holiness, purity, wisdom, power, justice, grace, and love...

- and to have the gift of His grace to enable us to not only to understand how to live this way, but to actually do it!
- to be perfected as His image!
 - to love as He loves who gave His Son to die on the cross for us!
 - We will all be living that way all the time by His grace!
 - What a fellowship it will be!
 - What a blessing it will be to be completely free of all your corruption and to live with a whole bunch of other saints who are entirely free of their corruptions!

- The Psalmist says:

- Ps 92:13 Those who are planted in the house of the LORD Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
- Ps 93:5 Your testimonies are very sure; Holiness adorns Your house, O LORD, forever.

2) Never will you have another hard thought toward God or toward your brethren...

- never will they do anything that in the least offends you...
 - and never will you do anything that in the least offends them.
 - Never will you offend God.
 - That is what it will be like to live in the house of our heavenly Father.
 - Ps 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

Conclusion:

This is the house that you have already been brought into through Jesus Christ.

- Let us all say with the Psalmist:

- Ps 5:7 But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.

This is the house whose foundation stands firm and sure forever because it is established on Jesus as He is revealed in the Word...

- Let us all say with the Psalmist:

- Ps 52:8 But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.
- Ps 84:4 Blessed *are* those who dwell in Your house; They will still be praising You.

But best of all, this is the house where God dwells.

- Let us all say with the Psalmist.

- Ps 26:8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of Your house, And the place where Your glory dwells.
- Ps 84:10 For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.