

2:19 Fellow Citizens, Members of the Household of God

Fellow Citizens Are One with the Saints.

Marius Victorinus: What are we to understand by “fellow citizens with the saints?” It implies a distinction between citizens and saints. But if this is so, who are the saints and who are the citizens? Saints refers to the apostles, prophets and all who formerly experienced God or spoke divinely through the Spirit dwelling within them. They in some way beheld God’s presence, as did Abraham, either through the flesh, through the Spirit or through both flesh and Spirit, as with all the apostles. Those who have later believed in Christ without any such special means are “fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household.” Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.19.⁶

2:20 The Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets

Prophets and Apostles Share in One Divine Plan.

Origen: These are fitting words to cite against those who would divide the Godhead ⁸ and think that the prophets belong to one God and the apostles to another. Epistle to the Ephesians.⁹

The Foundation for the Edifice.

Marius Victorinus: Jesus Christ and his teachings are the foundation for the apostles. The edifice built on this foundation consists in life and character and one’s conduct and discipline. The primary foundation is for life; the rest of the edifice is for its adornment and edification. The primary foundation, I say, is to believe in Christ, hope in him and trust in God. This foundation is the teaching of the apostles, which is also heard in the word of the prophets. Note the order of this distinction, first apostles and then prophets. The apostles beheld [God incarnate]; the prophets received the Spirit. These are the saints mentioned above: those who saw and those who were inhabited by the Spirit. Hence the teachings of the apostles and prophets are indeed the teachings of Christ, which proclaim the foundation of all eternal hope. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.20.¹⁰

2:21a *The Whole Structure Joined Together*

Joined Together from Above and from Below.

Chrysostom: See how he joins himself to us. Sometimes it is as if holding together and unifying the whole body from above. Sometimes it is as if joining the edifice from below, as if supporting the building with underpinnings and being its root. Homily on Ephesians 6.2.17–22.13

The Importance of the Cornerstone to the Building.

Marius Victorinus: He called this stone a cornerstone not merely because it is at the corner but because it is the first and most important stone. From it begins the foundation of the corner which joins and couples two things to make them one. Souls above already with Christ are united together with those that live in holiness and receive Christ in a mystery that is present. Souls below that are Christ's, including those of the Gentiles, are also joined by that cornerstone, Jesus Christ. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.20.14

2:21b *A Holy Temple in the Lord*

Growing into a Holy Temple.

Marius Victorinus: All souls made spiritual through Christ are joined and built up into a holy temple, where God dwells. As Christ is in all and God in Christ, all are a temple of God through Christ. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.21–22.15

Whether the Angels Are Within This Edifice.

Jerome: It is maintained by some that the whole edifice built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets comprises not only human souls but also angelic powers, so that all equally will become the abode of God. They argue that it would be absurd if angels and all the blessed forces who serve God in heaven would have no part in this blessedness. For in this is a building, put together harmoniously, that is growing into a holy temple of God to be an abode of God in the Spirit. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.19 seq.16

2:22 *The Ephesians Also Built into the Edifice*

The Ephesians Are Still in the Process of Being Built into the Edifice.

Marius Victorinus: As he does so often, he brings the argument back to individuals, that is, to the Ephesians. They themselves have been built into that same temple cornerstone. Here he cleverly adjusts his language to form an exhortation. They have not yet fully entered into this unity but are still being built up. There is a deficiency, and therefore he warns and exhorts them. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.2.21–22.17

3:1a *I, Paul*

He Establishes His Own Authority to Speak.

Marius Victorinus: It remains, after he has stated the truth that all their hope is in Christ and thus they are all being built up together in the Spirit to be the dwelling place of God—it remains, I say, that he should teach them who he himself is and whether he himself is contributing to building them up together through the gospel and can give a reason for his own authority so that they may believe him. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.1–2.1

The Disjointed Sentence Has a Simple Meaning.

Jerome: After a diligent search I have found nothing that answers to his prior clause.... For he does not say, “For this reason I, Paul, have done this or that or have taught this or that.” Instead, leaving the thought in suspense, he goes on to other matters. Perhaps we ought to pardon him for what he himself has admitted when he said, “if unschooled in speech, at least not in knowledge,”² and look for order in his meaning rather than in his words. This can be rendered as follows: “I, Paul, in the chains of Jesus Christ and in chains for you Gentiles, have learned the mystery so that I may hand it on to you.” Epistle to the Ephesians 2.3.1.3

3:1b *A Prisoner for Christ Jesus*

The Soul Confined in the Body as a Prison: Two Possible Readings.

Jerome: We often read that the body is called the prison of the soul. The soul is confined as if in a cage. Paul, for example, was constrained by the ties of the body and did not return to be with Christ so that the

preaching to the Gentiles might be perfectly accomplished through him. But I grant that there are some who introduce another meaning here: Paul before his birth was predestined and sanctified from his mother's womb for the purpose of preaching to the Gentiles. For this vocation he took on the bonds of flesh. Epistle to the Ephesians 2.3.1.4

Imprisoned for You Gentiles.

Chrysostom: This is a very emphatic statement: Not only do we not hate you. We are even imprisoned on your account! Homily on Ephesians 6.3.1–2.5

3:2 The Stewardship of God's Grace

His Stewardship of Grace.

Chrysostom: He is hinting at what was said about him in Damascus to Ananias, when the Lord said, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel." ⁶ By "dispensation of grace" he means the revelation made to him. It is as if he were saying: "I did not learn it from any human. God chose to reveal it to me for your benefit, though I am only an individual." Homily on Ephesians 6.3.1–2.7

3:3 The Mystery Made Known by Revelation

His Revelation Unique.

Marius Victorinus: Paul indicates that this mystery was made known to him through revelation. From this passage it is evident that a Christian, and a very excellent Christian at that, can be brought into being solely by grace.... Nevertheless, the power of God dispenses grace in many ways. Others come to faith by teaching, wherein by a legitimate training process and through the commandments of the Savior a person is reborn through the Spirit and water, so as to receive the spirit of Christ, in a teaching process that is mediated from human beings and through human beings. But what happened to Paul came to him by the grace of God through revelation. Although he, in my judgment, was the only one who received this particular revelation, God is able to reveal himself in this form or in other ways to others. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.1–2.8

3:5 Not Made Known in Other Generations

The Harmony Between Paul's Revelation and the Apostles'.

Marius Victorinus: He teaches that there is a perfect harmony—a complete unity and identity—between the revelations given to him and those given to the apostles. His purpose is to avoid discord and any appearance of having received by revelation something that was not given to the apostles by the living Christ. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.5.¹¹

The Prophets Grasped the Revelation in Part.

Chrysostom: Tell me then, what part did the prophets not fully grasp? How can Christ say later that Moses and the prophets wrote “these things about me”?¹² ... What he is saying is that the expectation of Christ was not revealed to everyone. It “was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” Peter, if he had not been guided by the Spirit, would never have gone to the Gentiles.¹³ ... The prophets therefore spoke but did not have complete knowledge at the time. They did not even have complete knowledge after they heard the gospel, which far exceeds human reason and common expectations. Homily on Ephesians 6.3.3–6.¹⁴

3:6 The Gentiles are Fellow Heirs

Fellow Heirs with Christ.

Jerome: The Gentiles are fellow heirs with Israel. Put more precisely, they are fellow heirs with Christ.¹⁷ ... It is not that some possession is divided among us but that God himself in his fullness is our inheritance and possession. Epistle to the Ephesians 2.3.5 seq.¹⁸

Members of the Same Body.

Jerome: Now the meaning of fellow heirs is this: Just as there are many members in one body ... and these, though in one body, have their differences and feel their own joy and grief in turn, so those who have believed in Christ, even if they have different gifts, are bonded together in the one body of Christ. Epistle to the Ephesians 2.3.5 seq.¹⁹

3:7 God's Grace Given by His Power

Grace Given by the Working of God's Power.

Marius Victorinus: Everywhere Paul reminds us that we receive God's gifts not by our own merit but by grace. Grace belongs to the giver, not to the recipient. And by adding "according to the working of his power," he also ascribes this to God, so that "if I do any work, it is God's power. For it is not my power that works in me but God's." Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.7–8.1

Proclamation Requires Grace, Preparation and Prudent Understanding.

Chrysostom: The gift was not sufficient if he did not provide power along with it. And, great as the power was, human zeal was not sufficient either. For Paul brought three things to the task of proclamation: ready and boiling fervor, a soul prepared to bear anything whatever and prudent understanding. Homily on Ephesians 6.3.7.2

3:8a The Least of the Saints

The Least of All the Saints.

Jerome: Although it is a token of humility to call oneself "the least of all the saints," one is guilty of deceit if one conceals the truth in the heart and says something else with the tongue. We must therefore look for an argument showing how Paul truly was "the least of all the saints" and yet did not fall from the rank of an apostle. The Lord says in the Gospel. "He who would be great among you, let him be less than all." 3 ... Paul demonstrates this in his actions. 4 ... Therefore the apostle Paul was meekest of all who sought to be weak on Christ's account.... Because of this humility, amazing grace was given to him. In this way he became "the least of all the saints" in order "to preach the unsearchable mysteries of God." Epistle to the Ephesians 2.3.8–9.5

Paul's Humility.

Chrysostom: Those who visit a doctor do not complete their journey simply by arriving there. They must also learn the remedy and apply the medicines. We too, having reached this point, need to do the same, by learning the great humility of Paul.... Paul demonstrates humility when he calls himself a blasphemer and a persecutor. 6 He describes himself as a dreadful offender on account of his former sins, which had

now been canceled, ... hence as “the least of all the saints.” He did not say “of the apostles” but of the saints who come after the apostles. Homily on Ephesians 7.3.8–11.7

3:8b Grace to Preach the Unsearchable Riches of Christ

The Grace to Work.

Marius Victorinus: Was work given before grace? Or did grace come before any works? That which is working is God’s power. So grace had already been given. When it is said that Paul was made a minister according to the gift of God, we understand that the gift of being a minister was given before his working to make him a minister, and his being a minister is the gift and grace of God. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.7–8.8

Unsearchable Riches.

Jerome: Unsearchable and hidden can be given two senses. The riches were previously unable to be searched out. They are now laid open after the Lord’s passion. Another sense, perhaps even better: Those things which by nature were unsearchable to humanity are the ones that have been made known by God’s revelation. Epistle to the Ephesians 2.3.8–9.9

3:9 Revealing the Mystery Hidden for Ages

To Enlighten All.

Marius Victorinus: When he speaks of making “all men see the plan,” this includes both Israel and the Gentiles. Paul had doubtless received the gospel for the Gentiles. But the Jews too can see the plan if they follow and obey. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.9.11

The Creator of All Works Through the Son.

Marius Victorinus: Christ is the only begotten Son of God, and through him all the rest are created. Through him the works of God are created, as God works in and through him. All ages of time are subsequent to Christ, being made by Christ.... Therefore, even though God is acknowledged as the Creator, God is nonetheless Creator through Christ. The term Creator therefore does not pertain simply to God as such but pertains to Christ and through Christ to God. Christ who was eternally begotten created all things in time. God worked and created all things through Christ. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.9.12

The Mystery Hidden from Ages.

Jerome: These riches of his generosity were “hidden from all past ages in God,” the Creator of all. Where are Marcion, Valentinus and the other heretics who say that there is one creator of the visible world and another creator of the invisible?... However, the phrase “mystery hidden from the ages” could also be understood to mean that the very ages of time remained ignorant of his generosity when all spiritual and rational creatures who inhabited all previous ages remained unenlightened. ¹³ Epistle to the Ephesians 2.3.8 9.¹⁴

3:10a *God’s Wisdom Made Known Through the Church*

Wisdom Known Through the Church.

Marius Victorinus: His expression through the church means through all the members of God and through every soul that has put on his mysteries and has hope in him. From this we understand what has been given to humanity. The powers and principalities in heaven are learning the wisdom of God through a human mediator. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.10.¹⁵

What Constitutes the Manifold Wisdom of God.

Marius Victorinus: Paul briefly touches on all the parts of the mystery that we have spoken of above when he speaks of the “manifold wisdom of God,” whether this be that he sent his Son or that such great majesty assumed the form of a slave ¹⁶ or that greater gifts were given. The promises are so great: the forgiveness of sins, the promise of heaven, eternal life, glorification and our inheritance together with the same Christ in his resurrection after death and even his death itself. This is what makes up the manifold wisdom of God. Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.10.¹⁷

3:10b *Made Known to Principalities and Powers*