

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Church is The Temple of God ***Ephesians 2:19-22***

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PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb:

I. Introduction.

- A. Read 2:11-22.
- B. We conclude today this important section that prepares us for the rest of the letter.
 - 1. We have learned in vss 11-13 that just as individuals in 1-7 who were dead in sin and far from God, but now are alive together with Christ because of the great love of the Father; so too, as a people group the Gentiles were far from God.
 - a. We contemplated how far away our forefathers were, without hope, without any way to find and know their Creator. I likened it to those here who were raised in an utterly non-Christian home. How do you look for Jesus when you don't even know He exists?
 - b. But God has brought us as a people near to Himself in Jesus Christ. And now we are richly blessed and safe.
 - 2. Then last week we learned that there are essentially three people groups in the world. The Jew, the Gentile and the Church.
 - a. Again we find that it is a work of God the Father through His Son.
 - b. In Jesus these two groups, Jew and Gentile, find peace with one another. But only in Jesus.
 - c. In Jesus we are all made into one new humanity.
 - d. In Jesus we have all become law-keepers, for He is our law-keeper and in Him the Law is summed up and fulfilled. Therefore the very thing that separated the Jew and Gentile is now not an issue.
 - e. But not only is there peace between these groups but there is peace with God. For at the Cross Jesus reconciled us to the Father.
 - (1) It is there that our sin is resolved.

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- (2) It is there that the Father brings us close to Him as children, having forgiven us through the willing death of His Son.
 - (3) The result is that we have full, free access to the Father.
 - (4) This is the essence of the Christian faith, that in Jesus alone can we be right with our God. It is our union with Jesus Christ that everything works and makes sense.
- C. What Paul now does is shows two consequences to this union we have through and in Jesus Christ.
1. We have a new relationship with both one another and with God.
 2. We become a new entity, a people who form the temple of God.

II. Our New Relationships (19).

- A. Following the same format as the rest of the chapter we see what we were and then the "but" and what we are now.
1. We were dead in our sins and children of wrath, but now we are alive together with Christ.
 2. We were far off as a people unable to even know God, but now we are brought near to God in Christ Jesus.
 3. And here, we were strangers and aliens but now we are fellow citizens with the saints.
- B. "Strangers and aliens."
1. The terms are essentially synonymous with shades of meaning.
 2. A stranger was a person allowed to be in a country but with restricted rights. The alien would be a foreigner living in a country but without rights.
 3. The key point is simple though. We were a people who had no rights as the people of God or with God Himself.
 - a. We were estranged and His enemies.
 - b. We had no access to the one, true God.
 - c. And we were therefore hopeless.
- C. "But you."
1. A very strong adversative. It marks out that stark change of position and blessing that we now find ourselves.

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2. Paul doesn't dwell on the past now; rather, he uses it to mark out the wonderful new reality for these Christian Gentiles.
 3. Remember he is instructing both the Jew and the Gentile in the life-changing work that is accomplished in Jesus. He is working hard to have the Gentile believer understand what a wonderful position that they are in.
 4. This is something I find is still a huge challenge for me.
 - a. First with myself, to constantly preach the good news of what Jesus has accomplished on my behalf. That I am richly loved and forgiven by God. That He call me son and that I am welcomed into the fulness of His presence.
 - b. But second, to remind and help each of you.
 - (1) There are some of you who live a life of doubts and sorrow. Some who spend much time sighing with regrets of sin and folly.
 - (2) Others who get too full of yourself thinking that there is something special about yourself apart from the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.
 - (3) And my job is to take you back to the Word and remind you what God has done for us all. To reminds you that it is only and always found in Jesus Christ. That we have nothing to boast in ourselves, only to boast of Jesus.
 - (4) And as these truths take root in our hearts and as the Father enlightens our hearts to see and receive them more fully, then we are transformed.
 - c. Some of you here are strangers and aliens toward God. And you need Jesus.
 - d. But others of you have Jesus but still feel like you are a stranger. You are on the outside looking in. And it is for you that passages like this can radically affects you.
 - e. Here is reality for you to preach to yourself. Yes, you once were far off and a stranger to God. But now, in Jesus, you are no longer.
- D. Now we are fellow citizens.
1. This requires little comment as to its meaning.

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- a. Remember that we are, in Christ, now a new humanity. This is just building off that image.
 - b. Once you and I had no rights, now we have full rights. We can walk and live in the confidence that we belong to the people of God.
2. What is more important is that we are fellow citizens with the "saints." What is meant by that?
- a. I don't want to take too much time, but this is one of those passages that some try to use to make the Church part of what is called "the new Israel."
 - (1) It is the idea that God has in some way or another either replaces Israel as His people or has a "true Israel" that is made up of both Jews and Gentiles. (Understand that this is being said very simplistically).
 - (2) Therefore the "saints" here are believing Jews who make up the true Israel and now the believing Gentile is a fellow-citizen with them.
 - b. However this simply isn't the case.
 - (1) Remember again that from the Jews and Gentiles God has made in Jesus a new man or a new humanity.
 - (2) Part of the problem is that it is easy to think of things only in the sense of Jew and Gentile. The vast majority of the Old Testament speaks about Israel.
 - (3) But not all of it.
 - (a) Before Israel there was Abraham, and he was not Israel; rather he was known as the father of Israel.
 - (b) Isaac was not Israel, but he bore Jacob, who was then called "Israel."
 - (c) But go back before even then. What was Noah? Methuselah or Enoch, Seth or Abel. Who and what were Adam and Eve.
 - (d) Add to that the mystery of Melchizedek who is called a "priest of God Most High" in Genesis 14. This indicates that there were many who were fearers and followers of YHWH prior to Israel.

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- c. When Paul talks of us being fellow-citizens with the "saints" he is not saying with just believing Jews. He is referring to the redeemed through all the ages. Jew, Gentile and anything else.
 - d. The wonderful truth is that we now, through Jesus, are part of the people of God for all eternity.
- E. We are part of God's household.
- 1. This brings us now into the fulness of intimacy and it hearkens us back to the first chapter where we were told that God predestined us to adoption.
 - 2. It speaks of being a close, intimate member. Not some second cousin you have to see on holidays.
 - 3. This brings us to the fact that if you have put your trust in Jesus alone then you are part of the family of God.
 - 4. Where is that manifested? It is the local church.
 - a. Is this something you believe?
 - b. Do you view Missio as not just your church but actually as your family?
 - (1) Families are interesting structures. They are the most basic structure to any society.
 - (2) Families are where you are able to be real. It can be shocking for many who know me only on Sunday if they then come and spend time with me and my family. It is not the same.
 - (3) Families is where you put up with even the annoying ones but you can also talk honestly with them without breaking that family tie.
 - (4) And the hard reality is that many of you came from broken, dysfunctional families.
 - (5) But in the Church, through Jesus Christ, you have a new family. In fact it is your family for all eternity.
- F. Paul loves metaphors and similes.
- 1. Especially true when speaking of the Church. We are Christ's body, bride and such.
 - 2. Here we are called citizens and God's household.

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3. Now he discards those metaphors and picks up two new ones to finish out this section.
4. Not only in Jesus Christ do we have new relationships, but we are a new entity as well.

III. We are a new entity, the temple of God (20-22).

- A. He transitions out of the family metaphor into a building metaphor in vs 20.
- B. We are God's temple built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets with Jesus as the cornerstone.
 1. This is in the passive voice emphasizing that it is God who is doing the building.
 2. We are the material, as it were, which He is using.
- C. Several things need to be examined and understood:
 1. First notice the centrality of Jesus Christ again.
 - a. Christ is the cornerstone.
 - b. It is in Christ (21) that the entire building is fitted together and growing.
 - c. It is in Christ (22) again you and I are being built together.
 2. Second, who are the apostles and prophets?
 - a. Some see them as "apostles who are also prophets."
 - b. Others see it as New Testament apostles and Old Testament prophets.
 - c. It is best to understand them to be the foundational servants of the early Church. The apostles were the leaders of the early church and the prophets were the ones within the local churches who could give God's word while the New Testament was being written.
 - d. Notice that here Paul calls them the foundation. In 1 Corinthians 3 he says that the apostles laid the foundation but here he calls them the foundation.
 3. Third, why is Jesus the cornerstone?
 - a. Simply put, the cornerstone was that stone off of which everything was built.

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- b. This stone was huge and set up the rest of the building. Its angles had to be just right or the building would not be stable.
 - c. The image then is that the foundation that was of the apostles and prophets was vitally connected to and through Jesus.
4. Fourth, this work of God is a dynamic work.
- a. In vs 22 speaks to the ongoing work of God in building the temple.
 - b. It is not done, but as God continues to call people to Himself through faith in Jesus another stone is added. Stones that Peter calls "living stones" because they vitally connected to the living cornerstone of Jesus.
 - c. When you watch a baptism, when you see people come to faith in Jesus what you are seeing is something far more than just a person being forgiven of their sin and saved. You see the master hand of God building His temple.
 - d. It is a temple made up of countless stones large and small, of every nation, tribe, people and tongue. It is a glorious temple, made glorious because it's cornerstone.
5. Fifth, we are being fitted together.
- a. In our day bricks are fitted together by mortar and rebar. But not in that time.
 - b. Back then it was a very involved process in which craftsmen would labor to carefully cut and smooth each stone so that it would perfectly fit with those it would be connected to.
 - c. This is seen more clearly in the Greek with the use of the *sun* prefix.
 - d. We are not just fitted. We are fitted **together**. In other words, there is no sense of being an individual stone sitting by itself.
 - e. Part of the wonderful work of God is that He is not growing us apart from each other but rather He is growing us into each other through Christ.
 - f. May I once again make the point, it is simply foreign in the bible for a person to claim Jesus Christ and yet willfully remain apart from a local church. That person is simply denying the very Lord they claim and rejecting the very work that the Father is doing.
 - g. So see clearly what Paul is showing here.

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- (1) There is the individual part where God is fitting you carefully to be part of His Temple. He is actively working on you.
 - (2) But also the corporate part where the whole purpose of fitting you personally is to place you together with the others to make the Temple.
 - (3) As this is something you see more better the more you will love and desire to be with the Church. Fellowship and worship will stop being optional and become, instead, necessary and good.
6. Sixth, notice again the Trinitarian nature of this work.
 - a. The Father is doing the building.
 - b. Jesus in the cornerstone.
 - c. And we become the dwelling of God in the Spirit. This speaks of the manner of how God dwells, He does so in the Spirit.
 - d. Never focus only on one person of our Triune God, for they are all always acting.
 7. Seventh, the function of this building is that it is the habitation of God (22).
 - a. That word, "dwelling" is interesting. It is a compound word that basically means a place to dwell.
 - b. But there is a prefix added to it that intensifies it meaning that the Church is that place where God settles down and resides.
 - c. Later in Ephesians Paul prays that we would be strengthened by the Spirit so that Christ might settle down and reside in our hearts.
 8. Eighth, this temple is holy.
 - a. Why? It has nothing to do with us per se.
 - b. It is holy because God dwells in it. It is the basic character of God that causes anything to be holy.
 - c. But it means that we are to treat the church as holy. It is not something to be treated casually nor is it something to mess with.
 - d. Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 to be on guard for themselves and to shepherd God's Church which He purchased with His blood.

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- e. The Church is not ours, it is always and ever God's. And we should gather together as a holy assembly coming in the name of Jesus, in the power of the Spirit for the purpose to praise and learn of the Father.
- f. In other words, the Church is a serious work.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. Again the centrality and foundational importance of Jesus is seen. When you lose Jesus in a local church then the church is simply gone.
 - 1. The name will remain but not the reality.
 - 2. Instead a new cornerstone will be placed.
 - a. Moralism.
 - b. Legalism.
 - c. Liberalism.
 - d. Social justice.
 - e. Psychology.
 - f. Humanism.
 - g. A million faces but none of them Jesus.
- B. It means that Missio must constantly be reestablishing its focus on Jesus both individually and corporately.
 - 1. We need to exhort one another and urge one another to press on toward Jesus.
 - 2. We need to sing to one another songs of Jesus.
 - 3. We need to pray with and for one another that Jesus would be made large in our hearts.
 - 4. We need to pursue those who begin to retreat and urge them to return.
 - 5. We need to not make the mistake of separating Jesus from His church. They are indivisible.

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Community Group Questions

- **How often do you preach to yourself the truths of your position in Jesus Christ? Why do you do it? When? And how? Secondly, how often do you come alongside another believer struggling and help remind them of these truths? This is one of the great opportunities you have in being part of a CG, to do this.**
- **Do you view MDF as your true family? How do you show and manifest this?**
- **How are ways for us to treat the Church as holy?**