

“God’s New Man—The Church” (Part Four)

Ephesians 2:19-22

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Introduction:

1. Do you think that we have a beautiful church? Do you think that it compares well with other churches? Do you feel that it is lacking something?
2. The way you answer those questions will depend on the meaning you give to “church”. If you thought of church as physical building, your answer might vary depending on your cultural preferences and personal experience. We could visit some places and say, “You know, God has greatly blessed us. We could visit others and say, “It seems we don’t have much at all.”
3. However, the Bible never uses the word “church” to refer to a physical meeting place. The word church refers either to the whole body of believers who are in Christ or to a local gathering of those who are in Christ. I think that most of us know this. But perhaps this is where a problem arises. It can be easy to look at another church and think, “Look at the gifted people they have!” And then we might become dissatisfied or feel inadequate. Such ideas should never arise in our hearts for two reasons. First, God has tremendously blessed us along with all other saints. That is our topic for this morning. Second, God has given us the people that we need for this time and place. Two illustrations...

Illustration: Once Spurgeon was to speak at a certain church, but his arrival was delayed. In God’s providence, his grandfather, who was also a preacher, was there. When the time arrived for the sermon, CHS still had not arrived. So his grandfather was asked to preach. He agreed and began his message with these words, “My grandson can preach better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel!”

Illustration: In the movie *Hoosiers*, Coach Norman Dale has taken over as basketball coach in a small town called Hickory. Nobody likes him, and the star player of last year, Jimmy Chitwood is not playing for personal reasons. When the team is introduced at the opening pep rally, people begin to chant, “We want Jimmy!” Dale stands up and quiets the crowd by saying, “I hope you will respect us for what we are and not for what we are not... This is your team!”

4. Connection: Note the opening word “consequently”. The apostle has presented what we were (2:11-22) and what Christ did for us (2:13-18). Since Christ has reconciled his people to

God and made them one, they now form a new humanity. They are God's new society. Paul uses three illustrations to portray our new relationship to God as his people. We are God's nation, God's household, and God's temple.

Exposition:

I. We are God's nation (2:19a).

A. Contrast with the old covenant nation.

1. God's nation under the old covenant was composed only of Jews. Their position as God's nation was conditional upon their obedience (Ex 19:5-6).

2. God's nation in the new covenant is made up of all saints (those who are in Christ). Our position as God's nation (1 Pt 2:9) has been secured by Christ's atonement.

B. Consider two key concepts about this new nation.

1. All in the nation are holy. All are set apart for God by the blood of Christ and are becoming more like Christ through the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit.

2. All are fellow citizens. All have an equal standing in the church. Though we have a diversity of function according to the gifts given us (1 Cor 12; Rm 12), we have an equality of position (Gal 3).

Point: Neither America nor Israel is now God's nation. Nor is any other physical nation. God's nation is the church!

Point: No local church has any ground for boasting before the Lord. It is wrong to have an attitude like "There's no place like this place anywhere near this place, so this must be the place!" Let us be content to live according to the grace God has given us, however people may evaluate us. When we all stand before the Lord, only one Person's opinion is coming to matter, so let's please Christ and not ourselves or others.

II. We are God's family (2:19b).

A. Contrast with the old covenant family.

1. The Jews had the position of minor children, who were under the supervision of the law (Gal 3:23-25; 4:1-3).

2. The Christian has the position of an adult son, who is under the leadership of the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:26; 4:4-6; Rm 8:9-15).

B. Consider two key concepts about this new family.

1. One of the wonders of redemption is that those who were children of the darkness are now in God's household or family. (For the meaning of the word household, see 1 Tm 5:8; Gal 6:10.)

2. This shared position of adult sons should lead us to display proper attitudes and actions toward each other.

a. We should have a high esteem for others in God's family. Before you interact with another Christian, remind yourself that you are addressing a son or daughter of God. "This person is part of God's forever family."

b. We should have a deep commitment to others in God's family. Changing the church where you worship and serve is a far more important matter than changing where you shop for your groceries. Yet many Christians show far more loyalty to their grocery store than to their brothers and sisters in Christ. The list of valid reasons for changing churches is very, very short.

Example: This past week someone came to me from another area church asking me if he should leave that church. I advised him to stay there and help that church through its struggles. I am glad for other local pastors and churches that give the same advice. I wish that others would.

c. We should have a mutual concern for one another in God's family. See Gal 6:1-10. God wants us to care for each other as dearly loved brothers and sisters.

Action Step: We must do all that we can to encourage and develop a family atmosphere in this local assembly. A family shares life together in all its extremes. We should share our new life in Christ, whether that involves joy or sorrow. We want you to love others and to feel loved by others. We want you to feel like you can let your spiritual hair down here, and not become overly bothered when others do the same. We want you to feel like you can gently correct someone, and we want you to be able to receive correction with a gentle spirit.

Illustration: In Hoosiers coach Dale tells his team, "Let's be clear about what we're after... Team, team, team—no one member more important than another."

III. We are God's temple (2:20-22).

A. Contrast with the old covenant situation.

1. Israel was not God's temple, but they had a physical temple.

2. The church is God's temple. We are a dwelling place in which God lives by the Spirit.

a. The chief cornerstone of the temple is Christ Jesus himself—in the fullness of his person, word and saving work. Our salvation depends on him alone.

b. The apostles and New Testament prophets (such as Mark, Luke or James) are witness bearers to Christ's saving work and final word. Through them the Holy Spirit had written about Christ, his will and his work (Jn 16:12-15).

c. The rest of the temple rises from this foundation and makes one temple with it.

B. Consider some key concepts about this temple.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is certainly and clearly supreme and central in this temple. The whole church rests on him and would collapse without him. As cornerstone, he also forms the pattern to which the rest of the temple must conform.

2. Though all Scripture is profitable (2 Tm 3:16), all must be interpreted and applied according to the final word of Christ through his apostles and prophets. The rule of faith, life and worship rests finally in the New Testament Scriptures.

Comment: This concept is one of the chief reasons that makes us a Baptist church.

3. Union with Christ is essential to membership in Christ's living building.... You are in Christ if you are trusting in him alone as your righteousness before God.

4. The whole building of Christ and his followers is one, regardless of time, place and doctrinal or practical variation.

5. The church is a work in progress.

6. Since the church is God's holy temple, we must certainly treat it with respect! 1 Cor 3:16-17