

“THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD”

Ephesians 2:19-22

Intro: I hope that you are remembering the threefold outline that I gave to you when we began the study of Ephesians in our Sunday morning services. And now that we are also going through this wonderful epistle in our Sunday School classes, it is doubly important that we keep in mind the plan that the Apostle Paul was following as he wrote this epistle some two thousand years ago. Since he wrote it, it has not been revised. New information has not made the original letter out-of-date. It is just like it was when the Holy Spirit guided the Apostle Paul to write the original letter.

A new day for Gentiles had been established on the Day of Pentecost which was observed in Acts 2. The Church was born. And gradually the Gospel was spread throughout the Roman Empire. Churches were established throughout the Empire, and throughout history from that day to this the Gospel has been preached throughout the whole world, generation after generation, and local churches came into existence. The Apostle Paul played a major role in the spread of the Gospel to the Gentile world. He, a devout Jew, had been saved, and commissioned by God to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

Several statements in Ephesians show that the church to whom Paul was writing was predominantly for Gentiles who had become Christians. For example, in chapter 2, verse 11, Paul wrote, “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision . . .” And then in chapter 3, verse 1, we read, “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles . . .” The truth applied equally to Jews who had become Christians, but Paul was directing his message to the Gentiles because the Gospel had gone to them as never before.

Notice again in chapter 2, verse 11, that Paul was reminding them of what they as Gentiles used to be. And that continued into verse 12 of chapter 2. But then in chapter 2, verse 13, he told them about the change that God had made in their lives. And among the changes was that the hatred and warfare that formerly existed between unsaved Jews and unsaved Gentiles had been abolished and they had been united together “in one body by the Cross” (2:16).

Then we come to another step ahead for the Gentile believers in the first

verse of my text for today in verse 19 when he wrote, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” Remember, Paul is not talking about what has happened to all Jews and all Gentiles, but what had happened to all Jews and Gentiles who had been saved by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And just as there were in those days, people who professed faith in Christ but who had not really been saved, so there are those in our local churches today. The truth that Paul was teaching here did not apply to them any more than it did to people who had never professed faith in Christ, whether they were Jews or Gentiles. The Church, the true Church, the body of Christ, is made up of Jews and Gentiles who in reality knew the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. These are the people that Paul called “saints.”

Paul used the word “church” which he defined as “the body of Christ,” to show the relationship that we have with Christ, our Head, and the relationship that we have with each other as members of His body. But here Paul used another figure of speech to illustrate our relationship to Christ and to God, and our relationship to each other.

We have other figures of speech that the writers of Scripture have used, often quoting the Lord Jesus Himself. For example, in John 10 the Lord Jesus is the good Shepherd, and we are His sheep. In John 15, which we are studying now in the Tuesday Bible Class, we have learned that the Lord Jesus is the true Vine, and that we who believe in Him are the branches. All of these illustrations are used to help us to understand more about our relationship to God and to Christ as well as our relationship to each other.

Now I have reviewed all of this to make you see why we can call chapters 1, 2, and 3, *the wealth of the Christian*. This is spiritual wealth that we are talking about. Our wealth has to do with our blessing in Christ. Some, while they apply to all of us, are personal blessings; others, as we are now seeing are what we can call corporate blessings, speaking of the blessings we have with each other in the body of Christ.

But now we come to a new figure of speech today we are “of the household of God.” We are no longer *outsiders*, “strangers and foreigners,” but we are *insiders*, “of the household of God.” Notice those words, “Now therefore . . .” I hope all of you can say that about yourself. You know that the Apostle Paul was describing what you used to be, and what you

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are now, not because you deserved all of this, or because you have earned it by working for it, but you are what you are now by the grace of God.

Notice also in verse 19 that Paul said that those who were saved among the Gentiles were “fellowcitizens with the saints.” When we get to Paul’s epistle to the Philippians, we are going to learn, if we don’t know it now, that “our citizenship is in heaven.” We may have citizens from other countries here today, but all of us who know the Lord Jesus as our Savior are citizens of heaven.

Who are the saints? I am, and you are, if we know the Lord. We are called “saints” because that is what we all are in name, and what we are becoming in our character. A saint is a holy person. None of us is perfectly holy, but we are headed in that direction. You may have a piece of paper that says you are a citizen of the U. S., or of some other country, but your credential that you are a citizen of heaven is your faith in Christ and a changed life.

But move on with me to verse 20. As “the household of God,” what is the foundation of this house? We are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” If Paul had meant OT prophets, he would have said, “built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles.” But the fact that he said, “apostles and prophets,” he meant the apostles and the NT prophets. See his reference to the apostles and prophets in Eph. 3:5. In addition, we read in Ephesians 4, verse 11 that the Lord “gave some, apostles; and some, prophets . . .” They are the foundation of this household which means that we have the foundation especially in the writings of the NT, especially the epistles. Churches, which are supposed to be local miniatures of the Church which is the body of Christ, are doing, and have always done, a lot of things that have nothing to do with the apostles and prophets because they have gotten away from the Bible. The Bible is all we need. Those people who have come along claiming to have other revelations from God in addition to the Bible, are liars and heretics. In God’s Word we have all that pertains to life and godliness so that no other additions are needed.

And let me tell you that what the Bible tells us about the Lord Jesus Christ is foundational to the Church. He is “the chief corner stone.” The word *stone* is not in the Greek text, but it is certainly implied. A. T. Robertson in commenting upon the meaning of the corner stone says, quoting W. W. Lloyd, that the corner stone here is the primary foundation-

stone, at the angle of the structure by which the architect fixes a standard for the bearings of the walls and cross-walls throughout” (Vol. IV, pp. 528, 529). So the foundation stone, or the cornerstone, determines the position in which the building will be constructed. It is the most important stone, that which goes down first, determining the position of all of the others.

Paul said, in writing to the church at Corinth that “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Neither Paul, nor Apollos, nor Peter was the foundation stone; *Christ was!* And there is no other. Therefore, we need to know the teaching of Scripture which we have received from the apostles and prophets, but it is especially important to know what they teach about Christ.

Now verse 21 tells us that this is a different kind of a building. The household of God is a growing building. And it is “fitly framed together.” This means that each stone in the building has been particularly designed to fill the place that it has in the building. You will remember that in the building of the original temple in the OT, each piece was prepared in the quarry before it was brought and put in the building. As in the figure of the church as a body, and all of us are placed in the body as it has pleased God, so in the building we all have been prepared for the particular place the Lord has given us in the body.

Peter expressed it this way: “Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house” (1 Pet.2:5). So this building is not of cement block, or of brick and mortar, but of people, living people, people who are growing, growing in the Lord.

Charles Simeon (1759-1836), an Englishman, who is remembered as the campus pastor of King’s College at Cambridge University where he served for fifty-four years, had a way of making the truth of God’s word live for the students and parishioners of Trinity Church. I have in my library twenty-one volumes of his sermons covering the whole Bible. His application of this passage is so timely for all of us that I want to take the time to read a rather extended comment which he made concerning the fact that we are living stones in the house of God. And his emphasis, as you will see, was how thankful we should be for the position that we hold in this house of God. Here is what he told his congregation:

Believers, whoever ye are, ye were once lying in the quarry, as insensible as any that are still there. It was not by any agency of yours, no, nor for any superior goodness in you, that ye were taken thence; but

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purely by God's power, for the praise of the glory of His own grace. He it is that has made the difference between you and others, between you also and your former selves. Oh! "look unto the rock, whence ye have been hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence ye have been digged" (Isa. 51:1). Never forget what ye once were, or what ye would still have continued to be, if God, of His own good pleasure, had not brought you thence, and made you what you now are.

Be thankful also for the means which God, of His own infinite mercy, is yet using with you, to carry on and perfect His work in your souls. If ye have many stroke of the hammer, complain not of it: you have not one too many, not one that could be spared, if you are to occupy aright the place ordained for you. Lie meekly and submissively before God; and let Him perfect His work in His own way.

And contemplate the end for which you are destined, even "to be an habitation of God, through the Spirit, to all eternity! Shall not this prospect make you "joyful in all your tribulation"? Shall so much as an hour pass, and you not give praise and thanksgiving to your God? Look forward to the end, even to "this grace that shall be given you at the appearing of Jesus Christ"; and beg of your God and Savior not to intermit His work one single moment, till you are rendered completely meet for the station you are to hold, and the honour you are to enjoy in the eternal world (Vol. 17, p. 315).

We often forget that the Lord is preparing us for eternity, and that the trials and testings which we experience now, will be for our benefit forever.

But before I close I must call your attention to verse 22.

This is another verse, like verse 18, in which all three Members of the Godhead are mentioned and active.

"In Whom" must refer to Christ. "Ye also" meaning all of us as believers who are a part of this building. And this does not just include those of us at Trinity Bible Church, but all saints who are in the Church. "Are builded together for an habitation of God," meaning the Father. "Through the Spirit," Who is now doing this glorious work. This is not a work that is completed, but a work that is going on to this very hour.

Now so we will understand what the Apostle Paul was saying here, let me ask you, Where did not dwell in OT times after the Tabernacle was built? Why was it built? To answer both of these questions let me take you back to the OT, and in particular to Exodus 25, the first eight verses:

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my

offering.

3 And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass,

4 And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair,

5 And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,

6 Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense,

7 Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the afield, and in the breastplate.

8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them (Ex. 25:1-8).

Is that what you would expect the Lord to say to them, as to why He wanted them to build the Tabernacle?

Or listen to two other verses which you will find in Exodus 29:45-46:

45 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.

46 And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God.

I would have thought that the Lord would have told them, "I want you to build this Tabernacle so that you will have a place to come to worship Me." But it was not that they would have a place to come to worship Him, but that He would have a place to dwell with them. Do you see the difference? It is really amazing isn't it?

The same is true concerning the building that He is making out of you and me and all of the rest of the Church. He is making us the holy temple so that it will be a place for Him to dwell with us. I can understand that we need to be with Him, but I can't understand why He wants to dwell with us. But the truth is, that He does!

Concl: What does this tell us about what is happening when we come together to meet at church? It tells us that although the Lord is always present with us, when we meet together we have a concentration of God's presence with us, more than at any other time when the presence of God is manifested to us. It is no wonder that we are commanded in Hebrews 10:25,

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Where does God dwell? He dwells everywhere. He is omnipresent. But the special manifestations of His presence are when His people are gathered together as a church. Make sure you are there.