

WE ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD—Part 2

Ephesians 2:19-22

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Will you turn with me to Ephesians 2? We are still talking about the fact that “We Are the Temple of God,” that in which He dwells on this earth. If you will look at Ephesians, Paul talks about the riches of the salvation that He gave to us. In Philippians he talks about the fact that Jesus is our life, that He is our sufficiency. Then in Colossians he talks about the fact that we are complete in Jesus Christ. Here is a man that is just totally overwhelmed by his salvation and overwhelmed by his Lord. He is in prison, and he is not even concerned about it. All he thinks about here in Ephesians is the excitement he feels about the salvation of those Ephesian believers.

In Ephesians 1:1 he makes a statement that we are developing in 2:19-22. He says, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and *who are faithful in Christ Jesus.*” Now, obviously, saints can be faithful, but saints can also choose to be unfaithful. He is writing to the faithful saints at Ephesus.

Now the word “saint” means to be lifted out of the mire of sin. If you put it in Christian terms, it means to be washed in the blood of Jesus, and set apart for God’s use. It is a person who has been delivered from the old dead-end street of sin, has been brought out, had his feet put on a rock and has been given a brand new song. He is now a vessel for God’s use. That is what it means to be a saint. I am either faithful to let God do what He wants to do in my life, or I am not faithful. Paul is writing to those that are faithful.

If you want to see what it means to be set apart, that is what we are looking at in verses 19-22 of chapter 2. Talk about being set apart! Talk about a brand new life! Talk about a brand new identity! That is what he is saying here. He uses three word pictures to describe this new identity, how we have now been set apart unto something we knew nothing of before when we were dead in our sins.

The first picture is in verse 19. We are now citizens of His kingdom. He says, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints.” Now, as we have already shared, when you talk about being a citizen, you don’t just talk about privilege, you talk about responsibility. The word carries a heavy thought of responsibility. I certainly have privileges being a citizen of His kingdom, but only to the degree I am responsible and do what He has told me to do. I am now a citizen with brand new responsibilities. Yes, I have new privileges, but hinging on those privileges are responsibilities.

Second, he says we “are of God’s household.” The word “household” can be translated family. Isn’t that wonderful? Think of our country and how the family system and structure has been totally ripped apart. A person grows up with stepparents or whatever else. Usually the people who are most effected are the children. They desperately need to hear that somebody loves them. God is screaming at them through the Scriptures and saying, “I love you. I love you. I love you. I want you to be a part of My family.” As a matter of fact, He not only births us into the family, as we know from John, but He also adopts us into His family. Both give us a picture of what He has done for us. By adoption He made us secure. Roman law says that if you adopted someone, you could never disown them. If you are worried about your eternal security, folks, you have been birthed into the family. You are eternally secure in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are a part of His family. Now, as citizens we have new responsibilities. As family members, we have a brand new relationship. Wherever you go, you find brothers and sisters in Christ.

The third metaphor he uses here is that we are stones in His Temple. Now he doesn't use the word "stones," we borrowed that from Simon Peter in his first epistle. He implies stones, because you don't have a Temple without stones. He says we are in the Temple of God; we **are** the Holy Temple of God in which He dwells on this earth.

That is where we stopped last time, looking at this Holy Temple that we are becoming, that God is making us. The foundation to this Temple in verse 20 is the doctrine given to us by the apostles and prophets. Of course, I Corinthians 3:11 says that Jesus is the foundation. When he names the apostles and prophets as the foundation, certainly he is pointing to their doctrine. They laid the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have it in written form today as the New Testament. He said in verse 20, "having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."

Then we saw the cornerstone, which is Jesus. In their culture, the cornerstone was more important than the foundation. Now that is interesting. In our culture, it is a little bit different. We don't always have a cornerstone in every building. In their culture, the cornerstone moves it up a notch, pointing to how important Jesus Christ is to all that is going on in our life. The whole structure rests upon the cornerstone, the whole structure depends upon the cornerstone. He is our cornerstone. We would not even be in the building if it weren't for Him. He was the first stone that was laid, and everything that happens depends upon Him. Now that is the key.

Third, we saw the stones in the Temple, and the fact that we are being fitted into the Temple. Verse 21 says, "in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord." That "being fitted together" was the term we ended with last time. I want to start with it here.

The word "fitted" there is rendered in most places in the passive voice, so when you think of being fitted into the holy temple, you think of the fact that God is doing it. Certainly He is. That is a truth. But there is another understanding of that: not only is God fitting us, we have the responsibility to put ourselves into a position so that He can fit us into that holy temple. That makes the rest of Ephesians make a whole lot of sense, doesn't it? That's why we have to choose to be filled with the Spirit of God. It is very important to realize, yes, God is fitting us, but we are responsible to put ourselves into a position to be fitted into this holy temple.

What does it mean to be fitted? Well, in construction terms, it is the whole process of what they would do with a stone to make it fit into the temple. Remember when they brought the stones to fit them into the Temple, there was not a sound of hammer or chisel. Does that mean God just developed the stones in heaven and dropped them on the earth so they could go and find them, pick them up and build the Temple? Oh, no. There was a quarry somewhere, and there was a lot of hammering and chiseling and rubbing and sand papering and getting the rough edges off. Some were too big, and some were too small. They had to be exactly measured to the design of the Master Architect, who is the cornerstone. He is the one who has the design. He is the only one who can oversee the process.

The fitting is not too much fun to talk about. We are in the quarry. Last time we talked about what it meant to be a nursery Christian. A lot of Christians are in the nursery. They are the ones who are in the quarry, but they don't want to be fitted. They are fighting against the hammer, and they are fighting against the chisel. They don't understand that everything in their life is overseen by the master architect who is Christ Himself. They would rather blame the devil. They would rather go off and chase something else. They don't realize that everything

going on in their life is a process, and God, the Architect, is seeing to it that a chiseling process can be useable in their life. The nursery folks are the whiners. They are the ones who are always griping and judging everybody else.

You are in the quarry whether you like it or not. When you get saved, you are put in the quarry. Now the key is, are you going to let God fit you or are you going to fight Him in the process? The key is, bow down, come out of the nursery, quit whining and go on and let God work in your life. You see, one of the things about a stone is, he doesn't get to choose the chisel God uses in his life to make him like He wants him to be. A lot of us have different tools in our life that God is using. I might be one in your life, I don't know. God is using a lot of things and circumstances. Go on and trust Him. Find your sufficiency in Him. That is what it is all about. God will mold you, make you and conform you into the image of Christ Jesus.

The hammer that drives the chisel appears, to me, to be the Word of God. If you will go over to 4:16, he uses the same exact phrase in a different context. It says in verse 16, "from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." That is in the context of God giving apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers to the church. They are equipping the body for the work of the ministry.

So the Word of God appears to be the hammer. It's either the studying of it, the preaching of it, or the teaching of it. Somehow that's where we find the hammer that drives that chisel that is conforming us into the image of Christ Jesus.

We want to see two more things as we finish out the temple that we are in Christ Jesus.

Fourth, there is the growth of the temple. I want us to see that in verse 21: "in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord." Verse 21 says that it is growing. That term "is growing" is the word *auxano*. Now that word is very interesting, and I want you to understand it. It is something that man cannot do. Whenever you talk about church growth, the word in Greek that means to grow is something that a man cannot do. It is what God alone can do. God is causing it to grow. Now, He is using living stones as we will see later on, but it is God who gives the growth. It is God who causes the growth of the temple. It is in the present tense which means it is going on right now. The church, the living temple of God, is in the development stage.

What does that mean? It means that it is not finished yet. It means there is still room in the kingdom. There is still room in the family. There is still room in the temple. It is not finished yet. You see, the word "growing" means it is increasing. It is being added to consistently. Oh, the Gentiles of Ephesus that Paul was writing to, were just a small speck in the gigantic building that God was making here on this earth, that spiritual dwelling, that spiritual house that He wanted to live in. When the last Gentile is brought in, then God is going to turn His attention towards Israel. Right now, the Gentiles are coming in and coming in and coming in. That is what he is trying to tell the church at Ephesus: You can come in now. The building is still under development.

You see, a lot of folks misunderstand. In chapter 2, it says the Jew and the Gentile had been made one in Christ Jesus. He didn't say Israel. He said the Jew. You see, a Jew is an individual. Israel is a nation. Israel as a nation has shut down the process because they have rejected Christ as the Messiah. That doesn't mean that God has gotten them out of His mind. He made an everlasting covenant with Abraham. He's got them on a shelf right now. He's got them on hold right now. He is in the process of bringing in the Gentiles. When that last Gentile comes in and He takes us out of here, then He will put His whole attention upon Israel.

If you will look in Romans 11:25, to me it is so clear. Paul says, "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in." What is going on with Israel right now? There is a mask over their faces. They can't see it. Why? They rejected Christ. Through the whole Old Testament and up until the book of Acts, the Gentiles were shut out. They were strangers to the covenant of promise. Now the wall has been torn down. Now the doors have been thrown open, and God has appointed the apostle Paul with a ministry to the Gentiles. He is saying, "Listen, guys, this is now open to you. It is open to all the world and to whoever will come to Christ. There is room in the kingdom. There is room in the family. There is also room in the temple."

I tell you, this ought to excite us to missions like nothing else. One of the things that worries me sometimes is when I preach I can't convict hearts. I might convince you, motivate you, inspire you, but as soon as you walk out of here, all of that burns out. Somehow, somehow, we have got to be overwhelmed with our salvation to the point that we realize it could be offered to others. The family still has room. The kingdom still has room. The temple still has room.

Folks, you need to get excited about the fact it is just growing now. There is still room! There are people in your family who are desperate to hear this. There are people in your neighborhood who are desperate to hear this. What is wrong with us? We don't even think about the fact that there is a lost world out there. The family has room. The kingdom has room. The Temple has room. It is in the development stage. There are others who can come in!

If you can't take the first chapter of Ephesians and the second Chapter of Ephesians and get pumped up about the fact that there are people who are lost out there in this world, then something is wrong in your life. Let me just run through some things for you. In 1:1, do you think that they need to hear that they can be a saint? Do you think they need to hear that they can be lifted out of the mud and mire of their sin and be washed and set apart and be useable to God? Did you come to know Christ later in life? Let me ask you this. Right before you came to know Christ did you think perhaps you had completely ruined your life and there was no hope for you?

It is the greatest message in the world to realize God loves you. He can take your past and cleanse you from your sin. He can put you into His service, and He can use you as a vessel from this point on. The world needs to hear that. It is growing. It is not filled yet. Go tell somebody.

In 1:3, they can find every spiritual blessing that they ever would look for in Jesus Christ and Him alone. They don't have to go over and stand on their head with yoga and that kind of stuff. They don't have to sit for hours in meditation. They don't have to find their little demons so they can lead them into a higher stage of conscientiousness. They can find every spiritual blessing they ever thought about looking for in Jesus Christ. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.

In 1:4 they can be part of the elect. I don't know how many people get hung up in that. "Oh, my goodness. God didn't elect me." Friend, when you are drawn, it means you are chosen. When they begin to hear the gospel and their heart is drawn towards God, they begin to realize, "All I've got to do is bow down, and I'll become a part of His elect."

In 1:5, they can learn that they can be adopted into His family. Now I can't say enough about that. They say, "Do you mean someone would want me?" You'd better believe somebody would want them. God can bring them into the family. There is room for whoever will come, if we will just get the Word out. There is room in the family, room in the kingdom, and

room in the Temple.

In 1:7, they need to realize they have been purchased by His blood. They are already purchased. The price has already been paid. I don't know how many people I have witnessed to who have said, "Well, I don't know. I've been so bad." I want to say, "So what! God has already paid the price. You can't do anything bad enough that He hasn't paid the price for on the cross."

In 1:13, they can realize they can be sealed with His spirit. Do you know what that means? It means to put into a container, the container is shut over you, locked shut and then sealed with the insignia so only the one who shut it can ever open it. That is not a bad deal on security for your salvation, is it? I still have people saying to me, "He can put me in there, but I can walk out." The mentality of that blows me away. People won't go on and listen to what God says. He will seal us. In 4:30 it says, "You are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Well, in 2:6, it says you can be seated with Christ in the heavenlies, always victorious in Him. You can ask people in this world, "Listen, do you want to have victory? All you have got to do is come to Jesus Christ. From that point on, He leads you in His triumph. You just sit down, friend, and do what He tells you to do. He leads you in His triumph for the rest of your life." You can live in absolute victory knowing Jesus Christ. They need to know there is still room in His kingdom, still room in His family and still room in His Temple. I don't know what that says to you but it ought to say something to us in these days.

Folks, we have the luxury of studying the book of Ephesians together. What about the people out there? They don't know they can have victory in Christ. They don't know all these things about being secure in Him. They don't know that He wants to adopt them into His family. They don't know that He has paid the price on the cross and redeemed them into His family. Somebody has got to tell them! Whenever we finally wake up and get overwhelmed by our salvation and by our Lord Jesus, I think finally we are going to understand that we are in the development stage. Isn't it going to be fun to be a part of God's instrument through which He begins to bring others into the family, into the kingdom and into the Temple?

The final thing I want to share with you before we close out chapter 2 is this, the Purpose of the Temple. What is a Temple for? Now he tells you very clearly in verses 21 and 22: "being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." The normal word for temple is the word *hieron*. It means the whole complex, all the precincts of the temple. This word is the word *naos*. It is the word that doesn't describe the whole temple, it describes the Holy of Holies where God would meet with man and dwell and fellowship with man.

So, what is this temple all about? What is our purpose of being put into this temple? That God might indwell us, that God might commune with us, that God might fellowship with us. God desires to fellowship with us, and He wants us to be the vessel on this earth that He indwells. He wants to meet with us. He is the architect. He wants to give us His design. He wants to empower us for His ministry and His work.

You know, in the Old Testament, God came down to dwell with the people in the Tabernacle. That is what "tabernacle" means, the dwelling of God. Wherever they would go, they would fold up that Tabernacle and carry it with them. It was a tent of meeting, and inside that Tent of Meeting, there were two rooms. One of them the priests could go into, but one only the High Priest could go into, once a year, and meet with God in representation of the people and atone for their sins by the sacrifices that he would make. That went on and went on and went on. Once a year man could meet with God. Finally it moved into a permanent Temple which

was a little different, but it had the same basic idea and still had that Holy of Holies, that inner sanctum, that *naos*, where God would meet with man based on the sacrifice, based on the blood that had been shed.

In the book of Malachi, however, God decided not to dwell with man anymore. Man became so stubborn and so hard-headed that God withdrew the fire out of the Temple. For 400 years it was a period of darkness. Now obviously God was here. He is omnipresent, but He didn't allow man to know that He was there. He said nothing for 400 years. Then finally, He broke the silence. This time the Temple didn't come with brick and mortar and stone. It came in the body of human flesh. It was born in a manger. The Temple on this earth, God's dwelling with man on this earth, was the Lord Jesus Himself. He said, "I am going to tear this Temple down, and in three days, I am going to raise it up." He was talking about His own body and being God inside of a body.

What is His temple on earth now? Well, if you ask a Jew from Israel who has rejected Christ, he'll say, "Oh, we are building it. We are going to have it soon." Certainly, that is true. We know there is going to be a temple, but folks, they have missed the whole point. When Jesus was on this earth, He never went beyond the Court of the Gentiles in Herod's Temple. Why? Because God wasn't dwelling in buildings anymore, He was dwelling in a man, the God-man, Jesus Himself. What is His Temple on this earth? It is the believers who are indwelt by His spirit. The purpose of being His Temple is for Him to dwell in us, for us to commune with Him, for us to walk in oneness with Him. That's the whole purpose of being a Temple, to house a living God. All of us have this purpose in our life.

If you will look at the last part of verse 21, it says, "in the Lord." That's Jesus. The last part of verse 22 says, "in the Spirit." Let me just say this as we come to a conclusion. As I am the Living Temple, I am united to Jesus, united in one with Him through the means of His Spirit. I commune with Him through His Spirit. Everything I do with Him is through His spirit. I am daily to be filled with His Spirit, as we will see in Chapter 5 and Verse 18 of this same book. It makes a lot of sense. The purpose of me being fitted into His Temple is so that I might be filled with His Spirit.

A thought really hit me. Since the growth can only be caused by God, I can still be a vessel which is not only being fitted, but is being used to cause the growth of the very Temple of which I am a part. God wants to use me. God wants to use you. God wants to use all of us as we are filled with His Spirit. In the Spirit, then through the Spirit, we become instruments through which He builds His Temple. It is amazing.

What is a Temple for? To be indwelt, to be filled with the Spirit of God, where God meets with man. When I wake up on Monday morning, what is the first choice I must make? My first choice should be to die to self and to obey the Spirit of God. Why? Because I am the Temple of God and being the Temple of God, I must be indwelt by the fullness of God. I must walk in oneness with God, be filled with the Spirit of God and be in total fellowship with Him. That's the purpose of a living Temple. We are on this earth, and we give visibility to everybody who is lost that Jesus is alive and that Jesus cares.