

LET THE CHURCH.....

.....BE THE CHURCH (part 2)

Sermon 4

Ephesians Ch 2:19-Ch 3

07-19th, 2020

Paul had been with the Ephesians some 10 to 12 years earlier as he was planting a church right in the middle of Evil central.

At that time, the city and area of Ephesus was the central hub of commerce... They were the keeper and caretaker of the Temple of Diana.. It was the money pit that fueled the city... Ephesus of old was considered the world bank

This temple was where the majority of Asia Minor as well as the majority of the ancient world worshiped this goddess of fertility...

God gave Paul special power to perform miracles, wonders and signs as we saw in acts 19 in order to shine the Light of the gospel, the Light of Hope, in a dark region in dire need of salvation.

Paul under the direction of the Holy Spirit led the way for God to build a true temple.. for the true worship.. of the One and only true God.. being the God of all creation... The Triune God...

Paul had been given a mission and ministry to the Gentiles to assure them God had included them in his plan of redemption...

And now the Jew and gentile were equal in Christ.. And being in Christ they were also now a friend of God...

Now some 12 years later is writing them encouraging them to remember that

Pp 1

Ephesians 2:19-22

...you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the **household of God,**

(20) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the

cornerstone, (21) in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into **a holy temple** in the Lord. (22) In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Paul is talking about the new temple as the old temple would soon pass away...

And the new temple is established but it's a temple not made or built with human hands, it is a temple in Christ, by Christ and for Christ..

Jesus Christ our salvation and Savior is the cornerstone of the temple God is building...

you and I are the living stones haven been added to this new Spiritual Temple..

Being a Spiritual Temple, we are to prepare for spiritual warfare.. We will see in Chapter 6 of

Ephesians the armor required to engage in the battle...

However here in chapter 2 we see Paul using metaphors that God the Holy Spirit gave him to help us understand the new structure being built by God...

The church is called the Household of God,

The family of God,

The body of Christ

The building

..... and now more specifically,

A Holy Temple which is built in Christ, by Christ and for Christ...

In verse 22 we see why we are being built as such, therefore...

Pp 2

In Him (Jesus) you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Holy Spirit...(vs 22).

Obviously, Paul uses the metaphor of the building...

However unlike a building made out of brick and mortar, we are the stacking of saved soul's and are the stones...

....the living stones placed upon the foundation of Gods spoken and revealed Word being the spoken word of the prophets and the revealed word of the Apostles

Built and held together by the word of God, united through the Son of God...

The apostle Peter must have been instructed or taught or at least influenced by Paul as he also addresses the scattered pilgrims in Asia minor (present day Turkey) during the diaspora or the separated believers of Christ.

(They were scattered out in the hillsides due to them being accused and now persecuted for Nero's temple being burned)

The Apostle Peter also speaks of the living stones in his letter.

Pp 3

1 Peter 2:1-5 ESV

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. (2) Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— (3) if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. (4) As you come to him, a living stone rejected

by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, (5) you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Every day new stones are added to the Church of Christ...

This New Temple is never finished until the consummation of the Kingdom in heaven..

Christ is still building his church, not by adding cement blocks, but by adding people who are the pieces which united together in Him...

Now in Chapter 3 of Ephesians Paul begins with this statement:

Pp 4

Ephesians 3:1-7

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— **(bow my knees vs 14)**

Between verses 1 and 14 we several verses or additional statements before he launches into his prayer for them...

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(2) Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, (3) that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

(4) In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, (5) which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

What is this mystery Paul?

Pp 6

6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, **members together of one body**, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

(7) I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of His power.

Now Paul's calling attention to his Apostolic authority and he's reminding of his commissioning as an Apostle with the authority from God to write this letter they are reading...

HE started...I Paul, a prisoner,

He is in prison, but he is always in prison....Why?

Because he's a prisoner of Christ, and because he is an Apostle of Jesus Christ, he is one of those who is the foundation of the church.

Why is this of importance? Look back with me to Matthew 16...

Remember when Jesus was at Caesarea Philippi taking to Peter? We find this foundation item again of the church.

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Matthew 16:13-18

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

(14) "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."

(15) Then he asked them, "***But who do you say I am?***"

And comes the so-called or maybe self-appointed leader of the 12...

Pp 8

(16) Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

What was Jesus reply?**Pp 9**

(17)... "You are blessed, Simon Peter son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. (18) Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.

Familiar verse right? There is quite the controversy or tension in regard to verse 18... Our Lord says ...

Pp 10

"Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church.

I personally don't have a problem with this.. (and good thing because Jesus said it).

Some take that text to mean that only Peter is the foundation of the church and that only Peter is the rock upon which the church is built and only Peter is given the keys of the Kingdom of God..

However, the rest of the New Testament speaks to the contrary... and here is one of those passages where Paul makes it abundantly clear that he also is part of the foundation... as He is an Apostle..

And for further clarification, the church's foundation is built not only on the apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul, but upon all the apostles and all the prophets... being the very Word of God spoken by the prophets and revealed by the apostles..

Paul is also part of the rock upon which the church is established, and he is reminding the Ephesians of the church that was established of this time period of God's plan of redemption... The dispensation of grace...

And the Apostle Paul had been given this special stewardship and privilege that Jesus Christ revealed to him beginning on the road to Damascus and also three years in Arabia...

God appointed and Jesus commissioned , and Holy Spirit filled and led Paul as our Apostle, the Apostle to the gentiles.

And now he too was part of the foundation as scripture is clear...

Pp 11

Ephesians 2:19-21 ESV So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the

saints and members of the household of God, (20) built on the ***foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,*** (21) in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

So don't go a telling me that the church was built on the apostle Peter alone as the rock of the church... Hogwash!

And besides that...

The foundation of the church is not man, but the Word of God spoken through the prophets and the word God revealed through the apostles...

The foundation was not completed on the word of God written through the Apostle Peter alone... It was also built upon the other apostles we find in Acts 1:13

The apostle John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the zealot), and Judas (son of James)

And now Paul the Apostle was also foundational material according to the word of God as he is an apostle...

Along with the apostles we find the prophets included as per scripture..

Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings...also Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi..

And Jesus Christ, the cornerstone fulfilling the law and prophets and the Word of God, establishing the Spiritual Temple, now being built to the glorify God, filling the church with the living stones!

You and me and all the on-earth believers in Christ who have placed their faith by grace in Him for the

forgiveness of sin, provided by the cornerstones is death and resurrection of the Cornerstone are the living stones...

We are it... We have been handed the ministry that Jesus left us with and a command to go with it...a command with to be a light of Him in this sin stained earth... What's the command?

Pp 12

Matthew 28:19-20 ESV

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

And here in the letter to the Ephesians, Paul is reminding them that they now also have the status in Christ to be fellow heirs of the promises and blessing of God.

The question of the status of gentiles was a burning controversy in the early church and it was a question Paul had to address on more than one occasion as he is doing so here...

And he certainly leaves no doubt about it here in terms of what is the status of gentiles in the new covenant community...

He continues in to address this issue in verse 8 of Chapter 3 but allow me to begin once more at verse 2.... Paul writes...

Pp 13

1 Ephesians 3:2-13

..you know God gave me the special responsibility of extending his grace to you Gentiles. (3) As I briefly wrote earlier, God himself revealed his mysterious plan to me.

(4) As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ.

(5) God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit he has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets.

Revealed what Paul, what's the plan regarding Christ?

Pp 14

(6) And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus. (7) By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.

I want us to see the humility of Paul being the plan deliver, and not the plan maker... He, like us are to be the conduit for God to flow out of... We are the Temple he resides in to do His works ..

Paul in the next verse says...

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(8) Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ.

(9) I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

What was the purpose Paul? What is God's purpose in bringing us and the Jews together as one?

Pp 16

(10) God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

What is special about this plan above others Paul?

Pp 17

(11) This was His (**God's**) eternal plan, which He carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

(12) Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence.

And Paul ends with...

Pp 18

(13) So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored.

Paul is comforting the Ephesians by telling them... don't be concerned about I may be in prison I may go through all kinds of afflictions and tribulations and have to endure all kinds of pain but think of the benefit..

This is our glory. This is the wonderful ministry that I have been given to make known..

Paul is making known this revelation which was hidden and now is revealed..

He includes the Ephesians saying it is not just my task to make this known but the task of the whole church...

The whole church isn't just trusted with the declaration of the gospel, the whole church is given the mission of revealing to the world that which was hidden for the ages...

We are equal in Christ. We are the church..

So he continues in verse 14...

Pp 19

For this reason I bow my knees to the father of our Lord Jesus Christ (15) from whom the whole family and heaven and earth is named (16) that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man...

Why would you grant us these riches?

Pp 20

That Christ may dwell in your heart through faith and that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able

to comprehend with all the Saints what is the width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (17-21)..

Paul's writing to these people that they might come to an understanding of what God has done so that they may understand who they are and in understanding who they are what it is they are called to do..

Paul is saying you are the church.. You are the church that God ordained from the foundation of the world...

You are His people you are His household.. You are His family...You are His spiritual temple for Him to dwell in... You are His precious gathering so be what you are called to be..

So, Let the Church be the Church..

We want to be concerned for our nation if we want to be concerned for our culture our priority has to be church..

The institution God has ordained, and Christ has established, is to be the change agent of culture..

If you think the change in this culture is going to come from the top down you don't understand how culture operates..

The change that we need to work for is within the church..

And when the church begins to walk according to the power of the Holy Spirit, and when the people of God begin to be the light to the world that they are called to be, I promise you structures will change, values will change, people will change... families will change... nations will change,

God the Holy Spirit through Paul is reminding the Ephesians and us to remember who we are, and what our foundation is and who our cornerstone is, and who is the head of our Spiritual Temple being built together for a dwelling place for the Lord.

We are to follow Him and that structure of agenda is the same whether we're living in Russia or in America or Romania or wherever...

We are call to be the people of God!

Do you love the church I doubt if there have been many times in our history where there's been as much anger hostility disappointment disillusionment with the institutional church as there is today...

It's hard not to be critical of the church because in many ways the church has failed us... but that sounds very strange doesn't it?

Why? Here is why....

For me to say that the church has failed us is strange because we are the church...

And if the church is failed it means we have failed and it's up to us to help the church be what the church should be according to God's word...

God has definitely done His part and now we are to do ours and be the church God has ordained..

And if we bow down to our Lord as Paul is writing here on bended knee, submitting our lives to the service of Him in obedience, the church will be the church God desires it to be..

If I can just comment on this briefly in closing...

I know that we're living in a time where there is a cultural crisis in our country...

Many Christians are decrying the corruption of our culture and complaining about the government and the governments value systems and all of that sort of thing... And I understand that...

But if we want to be a part of changing this, the church is the institution God has placed here to do just that in...

We simply need to understand who we are in Christ and be that!

Let the Church be the Church and let us be who we are in Christ as He has designed us to be to function in the Household of God...

We will talk about that next Sunday as we continue in Ephesians..

Love to you in Christ, Pastor Mike