

Built Tough, Built Together Ephesians 2:19-22

INTRODUCTION

Please turn in your Bible to Eph 2:19-22. Ephesians 2 is a work of art. It begins with an ugly picture of life without Christ. It ends with a beautiful picture of life in Christ. The opening verses describe our death in trespasses and sin. But these closing verses describe our union to Christ and His church.

The whole chapter shows us as Christians our new position in Christ. Ephesians 2:1-10 showed us what **we were like as individuals** before we were saved, what God did to save us, and what we have as a result. Ephesians 2:11-22 tell **what we were like corporately** before we were saved, what God did and what we have now and in the future as a result.

The church is clearly the focus in Ephesians 2:19-22. It is one of the most important biblical statements about the nature of the church. But you can miss the significance of this passage if you do not pay close and careful attention. **The New Testament most often talks about the nature of the church in word pictures. It does not give a formal definition of the church. It gives multiple descriptions of the church.** This is how Paul talks about the nature of the church in these closing verses of Ephesians 2.

The way that most people think about the church has little, if anything, to do with the Scripture. And if one's thinking about the church does not originate from God's Word, then it's left to whims, caricatures, hear-says, and conjectures. That's never a good position for understanding anything.

The main idea of this passage is that we, as believers, are being built into a building, a holy temple, a dwelling place of God.

Let's dig in...

I. The _____ used: we are _____ to God (2:19)

Please note three titles used here for believers reconciled to God and to each other. And they fall into two categories:

A. Who we are _____ : no longer _____ (2:19a)

B. Who we _____ (2:19b)

1. We are fellow _____

2. We are _____

Note the progression of the text. It is one thing to be a citizen of the kingdom. It is another thing to be a child of the king. This is what we are in Christ. God is our Father in heaven.

The horizontal relational implications of our being God's family are beautiful. **Family is the place where you can be yourself and be assured you are accepted. The Church is the place of reconciliation and acceptance, where you can be your true, redeemed self.**

**II. The _____ identified: we are _____
in God (2:20)**

Any builder will tell you that the most important part of a structure is the foundation. If the foundation is not done well then it doesn't matter what you build on top of it. It is certain to fail. So, when it comes to building a church that will bear up under attacks, persecution, and the opposition of the world, and then last for eternity, the foundation must be incredibly strong.

Two ideas flow from this main point:

**A. Built on _____: the apostles and prophets
(2:20a)**

The “**apostles**” point to a limited number—the Twelve, Paul, and maybe a few more, like James the brother of Jesus and Silas, identified with that title in the NT. **Their qualifications were specific: (1) they were chosen by the Lord to be sent out on specific gospel mission; (2) they were witnesses of the resurrection; they were taught by Christ; (3) they were given power to do signs and wonders in order to authenticate the Messiah and the gospel of the kingdom; (4) they spoke with the authority of Christ in establishing the early church.**

The “**prophets**” are referring to either OT or NT prophets or referring to both. Since apostles are first mentioned, they have the priority in Paul's understanding of the foundation. The prophets, likely, are those in the NT who were given authority to speak God's Word directly by revelation.

Apostles and prophets were foundational, so they were limited in number and in timeframe. So, when Paul speaks of a foundation built on the apostles and prophets, it was not a reference to their personalities. They were flawed like us. Rather it has to do with the divine authority given to them to speak precisely under divine inspiration the very word of God. So, the church is built upon the revelation of God concerning Jesus Christ and His gospel. It's not built on opinions or traditions or organizational structures or committees or elders or pastors. It's built on the revelation concerning Jesus Christ and His gospel.

**B. _____ to a fixed point: _____
_____, the cornerstone (2:20b)**

The ancient world used cornerstones in two specific ways. *One* was known as a “*keystone or capstone*,” which would be the topmost stone in an arch that held it all together. Remove the keystone or the capstone and the entire arch would fall.

***The other use*, and the more likely for this context, would be one large stone anchored at one corner, by which the rest of the building would be sighted, angled, leveled, and fixed.**

Here's the implication. God has established the church on His revelation in Holy Scripture centered in Jesus Christ. This means the revelation of Jesus Christ as God's Son who became a human being in the Incarnation, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary and atoning death, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day to ascend to the Father's right hand, awaiting His return to consummate all things—who alone is the Savior and Lord of the Church.

**III. The _____ described: we are all _____
to God (2:21-22)**

Two ideas flow from this point:

A. We are built _____ (2:21)

“*In whom*” points back to Jesus as the cornerstone. The church has its whole life in Christ. We must never think we can improve on Him or get beyond Him. **The building metaphor means everything in the building is joined together by God to Christ and to one another. It’s another powerful way to express the unity in the church.** Keep in mind that the context of Jewish and Gentile converts to Christ being joined together in the church, highlights the power of the gospel and the purpose of God to display His glory among people who otherwise would have nothing to do with one another. Yet they are joined together in Christ, providing a picture of unity reflective of the unity in the Godhead.

B. We are _____ indwelt (2:22)

What an amazing truth: God is building us together into His dwelling place in the Spirit! In the Old Testament, the temple was the special place where God met with His people and revealed Himself. But now, not in a physical building, but in the hearts of His people gathered in one locale, knit together in love, God dwells.

As stated explicitly in **verse 21** and implicitly in **verse 22**, the church as God’s dwelling place must be holy. The word “*temple*” refers to the inner sanctuary, the most holy place. God does not dwell where sin is tolerated or excused away.

Question: “*How much of our behavior would you change if we sensed that we were gathering each week in a place where God in all of His holiness dwells?*” When we realize that both individually and corporately, the living God dwells in our midst, we will be careful to walk in holiness.

CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this morning? Paul was writing to the Christians in Ephesus, but everything he says applies to us as well. As such, let me leave you with two practical applications:

1. These promises apply only to _____.

2. There is no such thing as a second-class

_____.