

“As a Holy Temple” (Eph. 2:19-22)

We're in the series of “In Christ”, studying Ephesians. Today we'll look at 2:19-22.

19

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

It starts with the word “consequently”. This section is based on the previous section. Let's look at the previous section.

4-6

⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions -- it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

As a result of these, consequently we have v.19. Let's look at one more section.

13, 18

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

They are the causes of what we see consequently in v.19.

So consequently what? Consequently, we are members of God's household, no longer foreigners and aliens. We used to be aliens, but now we are members of God's family, so no longer foreigners. We are not just temporary residents, who came from outside and stay there for a while. We are now citizens of God's kingdom. We are added into God's family as its official members.

The community of God's family is joined together with Christ's love and peace. This is the reality of God's kingdom. Church is realizing the fullness of God and testifying it in the world (Eph. 1:23).

This is what it means to be placed in this world as a holy temple. It cannot

be invented by human effort. First of all, it is constructed by God. Secondly it is connected by Christ. Thirdly, it is completed by the Holy Spirit. Let's look at them one by one.

1. Constructed by God

19-20

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

We used to be dead in our sins. But by God's grace, we are saved and transformed. We used to be far away from God. But we are called by God's love, and welcomed into His family through Christ.

In order for this good news to be delivered to each one of us, and to be realized in each of our lives, God prepared many messengers from long ago and spread this gospel from person to person, from generation to generation.

Each country has its own history of mission. There are many churches. Each church has its beginning. Someone heard the gospel and responded to it. The person testified for it, and some people responded to it. Then a flock of believers was formed, and it still remains there as a church. And this church plants another church, then the church plants still another church. Eventually, it became fellowship of churches, group of churches or denominations.

And the first person who started the church is called the 'founder'. We would say, "This group inherited this person's faith." However, that person also heard the gospel from someone. He was trained by someone to be Christ's disciple. And the foundation of faith is the OT and NT. That is, we can go back to the Creation to find out how the story of our faith has started. And we can go back one more step actually.

"God knows us before the creation of the world. Our God is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. We stand in a long line of men and women who through trial and persecution passed down a faith that has demonstrated itself truthful through thousands of years. We belong to a calling that links us with the saints in Hebrews 11, who, even now, the writer to the Hebrews tells us, look on

as 'a great cloud of witnesses' (Heb. 12:1)."¹

God wants to build his church in every places on the earth by all means, and make it the fullness of God. God prepared many messengers from long ago and spread this gospel from person to person, from generation to generation. God desires to welcome people there into his love and peace and join them together whatever the cost.

2. Connected by Christ

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²¹ In him [Christ] the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

Church grows by him, who is Christ. Church, naturally, has power to grow as Christ's body. It's just like our physical body which grows naturally. Each believer is joined with one another by Christ and become a part of his body. And the body grows more and more. Love and peace grows bigger, stronger and wider. That's how church grows.

Here the way the church is joined together by Christ's love and peace is illustrated as a building being built.

There are many pillars and beams in a building. Some parts are big and others are small. Some are long and some are short. Some are visible from outside, others cannot be seen because they are hidden inside.

A building is built by joining together many different kinds of parts proficiently. Some people may think, "it doesn't matter if we miss one part, because there are so many parts." "This part cannot be seen, so it's all right if the length isn't the right length." "Who cares such details, it should be all right if we cut corners."

No, it's not all right. No matter how many pillars there are in other places, you cannot miss a pillar in its place, or the building cannot stand. If the building is built with a part with wrong length, it is a defect building. If you use shoddy parts for the construction, the building will be a shoddy building.

Then, if we have all the perfect parts there, do we have the building built?

¹ Jim Van Yperen, "Making Peace," Moody Publishers, 2002, p.83

No, it is only a heap of parts. It won't be a building until the parts are joined together. Each part need to be used for specific purpose. They all look different. They all finished differently. But they are all equally important parts. If one part is missing, we cannot build a decent building. The builder knows all about it.

Jesus is the one who join the parts. Each one of us is each part of the building (1 Peter 2:5). He joins us together with his love and peace. He knows how the completed church should look like. He isn't just piling the parts randomly to see what will come out of them. Jesus knows that the church is a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless (Eph. 5:27). And he is working to build a church like that.

For this purpose, Jesus leads each one of us by His Word, prepares us, shapes us, build us up, and joins us together. When we trust Him, listen to Him and follow His Word, naturally Christ's love and peace will fill us. Naturally, we will accept and respect one another, who are different from one another, and will be joined together.

It is a radiant church that is being built. That is for God's glory. This is far beyond our imagination, don't you think? No matter how much humans study, discuss, and use all their technologies, they can never match God's glory. Right? Then what about us? We should listen to the one who is building the radiant church and follow him.

Each one of us is each part of this radiant church of His glory. Imagine, each of us are the indispensable part of His glory. You are an indispensable part of building His radiant church. It is such a large scale. There isn't greater honor than this, right?

We cannot take it for granted that we are Christians, we gather on Sundays, praising and worshipping God, and that we join the fellowship of believers, and form its community. For this, huge price had paid, that is the cross of Jesus. We cannot just play church, for it is God's radiant church.

A pillar and a beam cannot be useful on its own. If they are not joined, they are just a piece of wood, or a piece of stone. It is not until they are joined together that a pillar becomes a pillar, a beam becomes a beam, the roof becomes the roof and the floor becomes the floor. Only then, each part can play its original role.

We, believers are the same. Each one of us cannot fulfill each of our God given role alone, no matter how hard we try. It is not until we are joined together

that we can fulfill our entrusted roles. We can forgive and be forgiven because of one another. We can love and be loved because of one another. We can know our weaknesses and shortcomings because of one another. We can be healed, encouraged and receive courage because of one another.

Jesus is the one who does all these among us. He connects us with his love and peace.

3. Completed by the Holy Spirit

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²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

It is a radiant church, but it is still a gathering of people; the gathering of people who used to be dead in sin, followed the ways of this world, chose to be far away from God, without knowing they were confused by evil spirits. But the gathering of those people will become a dwelling of holy God by the Holy Spirit.

By believing in Jesus, each of us has received the Holy Spirit within us. Let's see this in the Bible.

Rom. 8:9

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

I believe the other way around is also true: If he belongs to Christ, he has the Spirit of God. By believing in Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit in us. And, in Christ Jesus, "the whole building, 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" (Eph. 2:21-22, NASB). So, Rom. 8:9 talks about individual thing, and Eph. 2:21-22 talks about cooperate thing.

1 Cor. 3:16-17 (NASB)

Do you not know that you [pl.] are a temple [s.] of God and that the Spirit [s.] of

God dwells in you [pl.]? ¹⁷ If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple [s.] of God is holy, and that is what you [pl.] are.

Here again talks about cooperate thing. We are joined together by Christ's love and peace. Here is forgiveness, comfort, healing, reconciliation and encouragement. And we receive courage. But we could also destroy this relationship and community.

The Holy Spirit is already in us. He is working on us. He transforms us into Christ's likeness daily (2 Cor. 3:18). The Holy Spirit gives us desire to live like Jesus. The Spirit reminds us of His Word in each of our daily incidents. The Spirit also gives us power to do the Word. But no matter how much the Holy Spirit works on our heart, it is we who listen to it and choose it. We receive it by faith, and walk in faith by the Spirit.

Completed by the Holy Spirit. The first key is Tune.

We must listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. We must know what is God's promise for us, and how he sees us and how he cares for us. We must make His Word rooted in our mind. We must engrain His Word in us as if it were our own thoughts from the beginning.

Also we can deepen our fellowship with God through praise and prayer. We are encouraged to pray with the Spirit on all occasions (Eph. 6:18). And when we sing songs of praise, our mouth expresses how wonderful Jesus is. Sometimes we may be in a situation where it is impossible for us to feel Jesus is wonderful, graceful, faithful and powerful. But when we sing a song of praise in a moment like that, through the words and melody, the Holy Spirit works and turn our hearts to Jesus, no matter how downcast our hearts may have been.

The Spirit will remind us of who Jesus is, of what he spoke, and of how wonderful he is (John 15:26; 14:26; 16:14). Our faith will be awakened. Through prayer, we talk to God honestly how we feel. In prayer, we hear from Him. The Holy Spirit will show us the impurities in our thoughts that is hindering our relationship with Him. When we surrender it to Him, it will be removed.

Completed by the Holy Spirit. The second key is Trust.

We know very well in our head who God is, what he is like. He created heaven and earth. He separated the light from the darkness. He released Israel from the slavery of Egypt. People of Israel went through the sea on dry ground.

He kept providing for them food and drink, as they wandered in the desert for forty years.

There is a difference between knowing and trusting. If the knowledge doesn't encourage and strengthen our trust in God, that is useless knowledge.

Here is an easy way to see whether we trust God or not. Are we expecting Him to work in our lives? If we lose our hope in Him depending on circumstances, our trust is not that strong.

A few months ago, I was going to meet a friend of mine. I arrived about thirty minutes earlier than the appointed time. So I waited. But he didn't appear at the appointed time. I thought he would arrive before long, but he didn't. I was wondering, "Well, I hope he has not forgotten the appointment.Hmm, let's wait for a little while." Around thirty minutes after the appointed time, I got a SMS from him. "I've been waiting for you at such and such coffee shop...." I realized I was waiting at the wrong place. I immediately replied him and apologized him. And I moved to the right meeting point. He was there, waiting me.

We can trust in another person's word. Yes, we do. Then, how much are we trusting in what God has spoken to us? How much do you expect God to keep His promises?

How did God show His love for us? He sent his only Son, Jesus as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1John 4:10). How did God show his righteousness? He made his only Son, Jesus a sacrifice of atonement for us (Rom 3:25). So, how it is possible for Him to betray us? How it is possible for Him to break his promises? We can fully trust Him. He will never disappoint us.

Completed by the Holy Spirit. The third key is Fellowship.

We sometimes fail. We may forget things. We may make mistakes, though we didn't mean it. Then, does God think, "As you made such a mistake, I don't care about you any longer."? "If you can't even do such an easy task, I'll have nothing to do with you any longer."? "God is mad, all the time. All the time, God is mad."? Is that our God? No, that's not He.

Peter betrayed Jesus. And consciously he said three times "I don't know this man." Jesus asked this Peter, "Do you love me more than anything else?" Peter answered, "Lord, you know I love you." "Peter, I died on the cross so that you will be forgiven. You understand how much I love you, right? Do you love me too?" "Lord, you know that I love you." "Peter, do you love me? Remain in my love, for I love you." "Lord, you know all things. I have done this mistake and

said that nonsense. You warned me, but I wasn't attentive enough. And I betrayed you. Even though I've been like this, you know that I love you. Although I am as weak as this, I want to remain in your love. Well actually, because I am as weak as this, all the more I need your love. I love you, Lord."

This is the loving relationship with Jesus. As Peter remained in Jesus' love, he received healing, comfort and recovery by Him. Jesus didn't leave Peter alone. He returned him to the other followers of Jesus, God's flock. There, he shared the love he received from Jesus with others (John 21:15-17).

We are the same. We need the loving relationship with Jesus. As we remain in His love, we receive healing, comfort and recovery from Him. We will share the love we received from Jesus with others in His community. There we will receive forgiveness, comfort, healing, reconciliation, encouragement, and courage.

It is not we who are doing this, but it is the work of the Holy Spirit who is in us, among us. In this way, by the Holy Spirit, our fellowship will become His temple. It is the Holy Spirit who will grow this temple and strength is and complete it.

Today we studied the theme "As a holy temple". It is God who constructs it. And it is Jesus who connects all the parts together. And the Holy Spirit is the one who complete it. Let us live as a holy temple. That is the fullness of God himself (Eph. 1:23).

For LifeNet groups and personal reflection:

1) The fullness of God is illustrated in a building. Take time to image: You are a part of it by Christ. What kind of picture do you see? What does God speak to you? What does he minister in you? What is your response?

2) Why do we lose our trust in God sometimes? What will you to build up your trust in him stronger and stronger?

3) Have you thought that God is mad you? Why did you think so? What was the situation? Listen to the conversation between Jesus and Peter (John 21:15-17).

What does the Lord speak to you? Why is the fellowship with Jesus so important?