

The Building of Our Church—Part II

Ephesians 2:11-22

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We talked this morning in Ephesians 2:11-13 about the preparation for the building—that building begins with a solid foundation. The bad news is that sin separates us, but the good news in verse 13 is that “But now [you are] in Christ Jesus.” We are in Christ Jesus through the blood. Typically, we talk about the blood, the book, and the blessed hope—the returning of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the blood that allows us to come to Him. Building begins with a solid foundation, and the building continues when we remove the debris in our lives. I did not talk much about that this morning except to say that there is nothing worse than starting a building project and finding that you do not have one of the pieces necessary to do the work. Let me do one little personal illustration here. I built a tool bench. It had 747 pieces. Every drawer, of which there are 12, had 20-something pieces, meaning screws and such. It took me a long time. The truth of the matter is, there is nothing worse when you are trying to put something together than to find out that they did not send you a particular item necessary for the building. Well, what we have to do before we can build the right foundation is make sure we have all of the materials needed and that we have removed the debris. The Bible tells us that before Christ these Gentiles were without citizenship, without covenant, without hope, without God, but with the new position in Christ they are a holy nation, no more strangers, and in hope.

Now, we pick up in Ephesians 2:14. In verse 14, we see the structure for the building. Let’s read together in verse 14. The Bible says, “For He is our peace, who made both groups one.” Remember, we said both groups—the Jews and the Gentiles. They needed to be one relationally because they did not like each other. They also needed to be one spiritually. The Jews needed to start acting like God’s chosen people, and the Gentiles needed to start acting like they were in Christ. So now, these two have become one.

Ephesians 2:14 goes on to say, “and tore down the dividing wall of hostility.” Now there were at least two barriers that were keeping the Gentiles out from the fellowship that the Jews enjoyed with God—other than the fact that God had not called them earlier on. There was the temple. The temple itself did not allow them to worship. Remember, I told you before that there were three courts. There was the outer court, the inner court, and the innermost court. The outer court is kind of the court of the Gentiles and the women could go there. They were buying and selling things. That is where Jesus turned over the money-changer tables. But to really get in where the sacrifice and the worship happened, Gentiles could not go there. So, the temple itself restricted real worship. Secondly, the law kept the Gentiles away from really doing business with Yahweh.

What we are going to talk about here is a construction company. Imagine with me, there is a building site. A lot of good builders will put a sign up with their name on it. The building project we are talking about here is the “Yahweh Construction Company.” We are going to see how He actually begins by *reconciling* us. In your family, who reconciles the checkbook? What happens in a reconciliation is that everything is brought back to true, or using the building metaphor—to plumb. Everything is brought where it needs to be. We see here God is restoring or *reconciling* the Jews and the Gentiles. He is restoring the fellowship that the Gentiles never really had with Jesus Christ—the Jews toward each other, and the Gentiles toward God. God is always in the business of reconciling and restoring. Conversely, Satan,

the enemy, is always in the business of destroying and dividing. I can tell you a church we pastored many, many years ago has been in recent days divided. They have been split in two. We had this whole city block and there were all these numbers of people, and now they are divided in half. Well, who won? Only the devil won. The people that have stayed and have all these great buildings—they did not win. They are having to shut down some of the buildings just for utility purposes. They have half of what they had several months ago. The other people are now meeting in a school. Satan is always about dividing, and God is always about uniting.

The structure for the building begins with building the wall. Look in verse 14, “For He is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In His flesh.” Where did He do that? He did that on the cross. We see here that the wall of hostility has been torn down.

III. The Construction of the Building (v 19-22)

I want us to see the construction of the building. Let’s pick up in Ephesians 2:15, “He did away with the law of the commandments,” that is one of the barriers that was keeping the Gentiles out, “in regulations, so that He might create in Himself one new man from the two resulting in peace.” Who are the two? The Jews and the Gentiles. The peace was between the Jews and the Gentiles. Peace was with the Gentiles and Jesus. Peace was with the Jews and Jesus. Verse 16, “[He did this so] that He might,” here is that word, “reconcile both to God in one body through the cross.” If we ever get to the point that we are not preaching the cross, then God help us. If the cross becomes old school, if the cross becomes mundane, if we get tired of hearing about a bloody religion and always singing about the cross, I’m out! It is the cross that binds us together. It is the cross that reconciles us. It is the cross that Jesus died on that He might bring a sinful man in touch with a holy God. Hallelujah for the cross—the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ! Verse 16 concludes by saying, “and put the hostility to death by it.”

This brings us up to where we are tonight in Ephesians 2:17-18. Notice the benefit here of having peace with the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 17, “When [Christ] came, He proclaimed the good news.” Now, what is the bad news? We are all dark. We are disobedient. We are depraved. Given to ourselves we will sin every time. The good news—what is that another word for? The gospel. Christ came. He proclaimed—that word *proclaim* is kind of like a trumpet shout. Verse 17 continues to state that He made clear the gospel, “of peace to you who were far away.” If anyone says, “I’m almost persuaded.” The person who is “almost persuaded” is far from God. You are not close to God until you are in Christ Jesus. We are far from God. We are in a far away place. The scripture goes on to say, “and peace to those who were near.”¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” For the construction of the building, Jesus took two groups, and He made them one. You can see this in verse 14. You can see this when He is talking about peace in verse 15, in verse 16, in verse 18.

In Ephesians 2:19, Paul begins mixing his metaphors a little bit. He is talking about the construction, and he is also talking about a family. I think that is interesting because most of us continue to have our families under construction. I don’t know about you, but I found that just because you are a grandparent does not mean that suddenly the family is all perfect and everything is all on easy street. No. Life continues to go on. Verse 19, “So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens.” The idea behind the word *foreigner* and *stranger* is a *resident alien*. You are not an alien in that you are from another planet. You are here, but you are not really a resident. For example, there are people that are in our country, and they are working, and they are here legitimately. However, there are certain rights they do not have. They cannot vote. They cannot hold an office on a national basis. As aliens, though you are a resident, you do not have all of the benefits of being a naturalized person. Now, you are “fellow citizens” with the saints. Gentiles, the door is open for you. You now are part of the chosen ones, “and members of God’s household.”

A. The Foundation of the Building

I want to talk briefly about the foundation of the building. Ephesians 2:20, “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone.” 1 Corinthians 3:11, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” What Paul is saying to these Ephesians is, “We are bringing in these Gentiles. We are bringing in these Jews. We are building this church. The foundation is the apostles and prophets, and Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone.” If you look back in Acts, you will see it talks a lot about the apostles’ teaching and the apostles’ doctrine. Here he is saying that Jesus is the foundational truth of this building foundation that we have. The truth about Jesus Christ is foundational. It is the foundation of all of the beliefs that we build our faith on. He is our foundational support. He is our strength in the midst of storms.

B. The Frame of the Building

So, God brought these two groups together, tore down all of the barriers, and three new things happened. You’ll find them right here in the verses. First of all, in verse 19 it tell us they became citizens of the kingdom. If you look in verse 19, “you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens.” I could not find any place in the Bible that uses that exact phraseology, only here when he is talking about building this church made of all different kinds of people from all different backgrounds. I could not help but think about our church. How that God wants to build our church with different races, with different socioeconomic backgrounds, maybe with different religious backgrounds, and we would come together under the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ as citizens of the kingdom. Do you know what is typically said about a third-world nation? It is a two-class society—the very rich and the very, very poor. What I believe the apostle Paul is envisioning through our Lord Jesus Christ for this circular letter that is going to the Ephesians, is a one-class society. Having nothing to do with how much money you have in the bank, or having nothing to do with where you are in the social register of life. But you are a fellow citizen of the kingdom and have all the accoutrements that go with being a fellow citizen.

But verse 19 also says this you are “fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household.” To be a part of a nation is one thing, but to be a part of a family—that is a step even deeper. Here he is saying, “You are closer than a nation. You are related by blood.” We are blood relatives. We are all related. We are related by spiritual birth, and we are related by blood—by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am happy about that.

Then in verses 20-22, you see this third thing that has happened to these new folks who are the foundation of this building. Not only are they citizens of the kingdom, not only are they members of the family, but notice in verse 20 he uses this construction metaphor—you are bricks in God’s building. Verses 20-21, “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone.”²¹ The whole building is being fitted together in Him and is growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord.” I did not used to like calling this place in here the *Sanctuary*. I wanted to call it the *Worship Center*, and I still do. We sing a song, “Lord Prepare Me To Be A Sanctuary.” The point is that a sanctuary is something that is set apart for a specific purpose. There are things that are set apart for specific things. That is what they are known for. We, as a sanctuary, are to be set apart to worship the Lord. This is a beautiful picture here—a whole building being fitted together. He is saying that you have gone from being far away from God to being a part of God’s sanctuary—the frame of the building. Listen to 1 Peter 2:5, “you yourselves, as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.” Have you ever heard this song, “Jesus Is the Cornerstone. He came for sinners to atone though rejected by His own. Jesus is the cornerstone.” Here we find ourselves in the mix fit into this sanctuary for the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the cornerstone. We are the living stones that make up this mansion. As a mansion, He is shaping us to become living stones.

C. *The Function of the Building*

Look at Ephesians 2:21 again, “The whole building is being fitted together in Him and is growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord.” May I confess something to you? I have had to repent of something. I really wanted to come to Surrey Hills Baptist Church and not talk about numbers all the time and not make it like this whole thing that I am getting my ego soothed by how our church is doing. I really did not want to talk about growth. In my heart, I wanted to talk about health. I really do. Can I tell you something? God continues to bring before me the word *growth*—the word that I have been trying to get away from in my heart because I think so many of my peers have kind of OD on this. They have gotten their own ego soothed by growing a church. Listen to the word, “The whole building is being fitted together in Him and is growing into a holy sanctuary.” You know I don’t say this a lot, but it was as if the Lord gave me a word about this. If I ever say that—this is serious. It is as if the Lord told me, “Stop being afraid to talk about growth. Stop being afraid that people are going to question your motivation.” Spiritual growth and development and discipleship are what God wants us to do at Surrey Hills. Here is the illustration I have for you. Has anyone ever deep-sea dived or snorkeled? We went to the Caribbean, and I saw this coral. This coral looked like a stone or a rock, but do you know that it really is a living organism? It is growing. Our church might look like we have this great building structure, but what we really are is a living, growing organism. I will make a covenant to you as your pastor. I am not going to hype up here and get my ego soothed by talking about numbers, but I am convinced that God wants our church to grow. I am going to repent from not talking about it for fear that someone is going to question my motivation. God wants us to grow spiritually, and God wants us to grow numerically. It is the spiritual growth and development that this passage is talking about.

In verse 22, “in whom you also are being built together for God’s dwelling in the Spirit.” Do we believe the Scripture? If we believe the Scripture, then we believe that God wants to bring those who are far away—spiritual Gentiles. The Gentiles were called *dogs* in a bad sense. They were called the worst of the worst. But God allowed those folks to come to Him as well as the Jews who were supposed to be right with God but certainly were not living like it. He allowed them both to become one and be fit into the body of Christ. In doing so, this building, this growth, this living organism called *the church* is what God wants us to be. Oh, the blood of Jesus Christ that allows us to come to the cross and to draw near to Him. Let’s bow for prayer.