

Ephesians Series – Part 2

We Are God's Dwelling

Pastor Brian Flewelling

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Ephesians 2:1-3:13

Intro:

Last week we learned from Ephesians 1 that God is a father, and he is still adopting and transforming lives.

Today Paul uses an entirely different analogy to help us understand God and the Church. In fact, each chapter he uses a different analogy to help us understand this dynamic relationship. Next week: Body, Bride, Army. Today we pick up our analogy (theme verse).

Ephesians 2:22

And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling (a Holy Temple v.21) in which God lives by his Spirit.

Slide: Photo of the Temple of Artemis



Ephesus, in their back yard was the house of the god Artemis. The greatest architecture in the world.

- Temple. This external emblem of worship. Orderly. Mathematical precision.
- Prostitutes were filled with the deity. The worshippers would engage in promiscuous acts to be united to the deity.
- Majestic emblem. But insides of it was all that was vile and unclean and deadly.

- Jesus said this of the religious community too. “...*you are like painted tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. Matthew 23:27*”
- Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7
- **What’s on the inside of you is more important than what’s on the outside of you.**

Slide: Jesus & Artemis



Jesus said, “*If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink.*”

This is Artemis with all her reproductive organs saying, “*Come to me, I will supply all your needs.*” This is the alternative the world promises.

- Everything on the outside of your life might look ship-shape.
- You can have a beach body; make 6 figures; be a high functioning leader; your family looks so put-together; run in all the influential circles of friends.
- *Yet inside is still full of anxiety, jealousy, fits of self-defense, sexual perversion, bouts of depression, discouragement, and control.*
- *Nick was having a great run. Working 30-hour weeks, making big \$\$\$, hanging with special people. Latest technology and equipment in his field.*

Michael asked how are things going? Answer: Living the dream.

Michael: How's your soul? Answer: I'm miserable. I haven't been to church in years.

Paul says, you are God’s temple. What furniture are you filling your life with?

- The furniture of the world – Artemis?
- Or are you spending your precious lifetime filling it with meditation and prayer, and reading his word, labor of purpose, acts of love and service, cultivating relationships, worship of the Father? -- the furniture of the Lord?
- What does the God of heaven and earth need? He doesn’t need your talent, your success, religious zeal.

- He goes out into the highways choosing beggars, the poor, the outcast, and the children. It turns out he doesn't want a temple that looks fabulous on the outside. No, that doesn't feel like home.
- Desperation is the hydraulics that draws him. Humility is the container for truth. Compassion is the chalice that contains beauty. Goodness is the company of friends God keeps. So, if you're going to decorate your house, first decorate it with love and virtue and adoration of your Father.
- God says, you are my home. I want to fill you. I want you to be full of me. Full of perfect love. That's beautiful. But there's a problem...

Ephesians 2:1-10

v. 1 "As for you, you were dead in your transgression and sins..."

- *Ill: putrid salad*

v.1-3 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.

3 Enemies:

1. world (persuasion of society around us),
2. deceiver
3. deceitful desires -- Your animal instincts. I have the enemy living inside of me. New Testament says don't trust your appetites. They deceive you.

v.3 Like the rest we were by nature objects (children) of wrath. We haven't gotten to v.4 yet.

Ill: Demolition. We cleared the grounds. You don't want to be in the way.

You don't want to be tangled up in sin when he pours out his anger on that hideous thing. Sin, that terrible dislocation from father and family. Abuse of others and of self. It's catastrophic. None of us are exempt. If we try to hide in it, if we think that the secrecy of the darkness will cover us, we will be destroyed by it. But if we come out from it, and confess it, won't the Father immediately love his child and show her his mercies?

"By nature..." It is universal, we are a race under wrath. We are standing under a building scheduled for demolition. Our generation is celebrating it: "How could it be wrong if it feels so right."

- If you're driving at 3 in the morning, nothing feels more right than to closing your eyes.
- Give a man a house and he wants a palace.
- Give a man bread and he wants a feast.
- Give a man a wife and he wants a harem.
- Give a man mercy and he wants judgement for the one that wronged him.

- Give him a promotion, he wants power.
- Give him wisdom, he wants to be honored for his wisdom.
- He doesn't know when to say, "I'm satisfied. Thank you, Father. I have all I need in Christ Jesus." He's been infected with the blood of vampires that sucks the world dry with his cravings.
- Over and over the scriptures tell us **Don't trust your instincts. They are lying to you.**

[Ephesians 2:4-10]

Notice who is doing all the work? You thought you were choosing life. Life chose you.

2:4-6 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ (You thought you were choosing life. Life was choosing you.) 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,

- Where are you now church?
- It is true that because of Jesus we have already been raised up with God clothed with immense power and holiness. It is also true that we will spend the rest of our lives learning how to live according to that power and virtue that he says we already possess.

2:7-10 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace (resources), expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- God's Craftsmanship. Craftsman is someone who builds something of purpose with a high degree of artistry and excellence.
- God's a craftsman.
- Before God we were just plodding through life aiming at whatever gave us a sense of fulfillment. Scattered stones.
- It is like that salad bowl. Some of it is still good, some of it is pretty rotten...
- God starts rebuilding us taking the scattered stones of your life and repurposing them...
- Adding his healing, his wisdom and character to your attitudes, your habits...
- **God is redesigning you to be a house of love**, a container of his compassion, a reservoir of his resources, you are his dwelling.
- It's a work in progress.
- Our work is to make room for him. Above all else, prioritize him.
- His work is to transform us. He's cleaning out the vile lusts of Artemis and changing the things we desire altogether.

Hold onto that thought. We'll come back to it. Something very important Paul is building in this next section of his argument.

[Ephesians 2:11-22]

In Jesus you are being built together with others.

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

- God is rebuilding **you**, but now he wants to rebuild **us**.
- That fact that he has made you alive, made peace with you. That is one miracle.
- And now he wants to make peace between you and me, that is an entirely different miracle.
- The God of love restores us to love one another. Joins us together in tenacious love.

Ephesians 3:10

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.

- Ill: Shopping for a diamond
- The entire job of the shank is to hold the diamond.
- Multi-colored (rainbow) – of Christ's presence.
- Each of us bring a different color, entire spectrum.
Together we reveal the full character of Jesus to the world.
- It's often the people you find hardest to love that you have the most to learn from.
- Unity doesn't come from conformity. It comes from the Spirit of honor.

I'm not saying this is easy. Messy.

2:11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—

- a racial, religious slur, deep seated division rooted in spiritual superiority that was devouring their community.

2:12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

- In verse 1 he said, **You were dead**.
- Now he's saying, **You were separate**. – That's a terrible place to be.

2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- V.13 “through the blood;” v.15 “abolishing in his flesh;” v.16 “through the cross”
- Jesus did a very legal thing, to create a very relational connection to the Father and to each other.

What was motivating God? His purpose?

2:14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

2:15-17 ...His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

- His purpose was to create peace with God, and then through God to each other. We are two pepperonis on the same pizza.
- He’s restoring us to community, to brotherhood, to a global family.
- *“Only God can call an African to pastor to an English-speaking Chinese Church in French speaking Quebec in North America.”*
- Don’t try building peace without the Spirit.
- **Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit.**
- Discord is the law of gravity acting in humanity: As far back as Cain & Abel, Isaac & Ishmael, Jacob & Esau.
- Without the deeply penetrating Spirit of Christ, we are all bricks and no mortar.
- No amount of coercions of racial solidarity, or superficial religious efforts will solve the problem. These are band aids on compound fractures.
- We’re not talking about gimmicky superficial attempts, we’re talking about the Spirit of sacrificial love, that would go to the cross for a brother, living inside of you.
- Profound bending of oneself down and lifting of the other up as a jewel cut with the hands of the Craftsman.

Final Thought:

Slide: “Sinful as she is, the Church is the colony of heaven. In her, the Kingdom of God is at hand. She is the one concrete, bodily manifestation of the Father’s will of love in the earth.”

- God has no plans without his Church.
- You can’t follow the God of Love and not be connected to his family.
- Count Zinzendorf said, “I acknowledge no Christianity without fellowship.”
- I’m imploring you -- don’t walk away from the Church.
- Don’t be offended at her imperfections.
- She is the shank that holds the diamond.
- Work out forgiveness and love in the presence of witnesses.
- Pray for the churches of Lancaster, she carries the hope for our county.

In the shadow of the Ephesian temple to Artemis, God is delivering a shocking statement to the Ephesian churches. You are my temple. When the world looks within you, they should find me!

Ministry Prayer: