

The Church of Christ
Ephesians 2: 11–22

December 11, 2005

SERMON NOTES

A. Church Fellowship – Community Responsibility

1. how do I think of our local church?

2. what do I think about membership in a local church?

B. The Nature of the Church

1. the Church Universal or the Church Local?
 - a. 1 Corinthians 12:13: The church universal, consisting of all believers is one body because ...

 - b. The local church is identified in the New Testament in such ways as (1 Corinthians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15, Philemon 2) ...

2. the Place of Meeting or the People who Meet? — the church is ...

3. the Leaders or the Congregation? — the church is represented by ...

C. The Church as a Unity

1. Unity of Jew and Gentile Ephesians 2:11-14
 - a. Galatians 3:28; the gospel has ...

2. Unity of Peace with God and Man Ephesians 2:14–17
 - a. the enmity has been destroyed by ...

 - b. the basis for the resulting peace is ...

D. The Church as a Body

1. Brought together at the Cross Ephesians 2:16
 - a. Romans 12:4–5; those who constitute the church are likened to ...

2. Romans 12:6–13 (and 1 Corinthians 12) Purposes of being members in this body are ...

3. Sharing One Spirit Ephesians 2:18
 - a. the reason and result of this is ...

E. The Church as a Nation, God’s Household Ephesians 2:19–20

1. becoming part of God’s church makes us ...

2. 1 Peter 2:9 so that we can be ...

F. The Church as a Building, God’s Temple Ephesians 2:21–22

1. because of this, people should expect to find ...

2. 1 Peter 2:4–5, this “building,” though, is constructed of ...

3. and in this “building” we can offer ...

G. Conclusion

1. the necessary precedent Ephesians 2:1–10
2. for the believer

A. Church Fellowship – Community Responsibility

1. some time ago, we prepared a leaflet for our church
 - a. entitled “A Church Portrait”
 - b. in which were outlined this church’s Vision, Mission, Beliefs and Values in a very brief form
 - c. attempting to give the biblical basis for each of these

2. some of you may recall that when we introduced this leaflet
 - a. we also announced our intention to prepare two others
 - b. on the subject of believer’s baptism, entitled “Baptism: What’s a Little Water”, and
 - c. on the subject of church membership, entitled “Church Fellowship: Community Responsibility”
 - d. again, concentrating on the biblical truths that underly these two items of baptism and membership
 - e. well, time has a way of disappearing quickly into history, so these two items still are heading up my “to do” list!
 - f. and have occasioned some thought on my part
 - g. so that they were somewhat behind my thoughts when I planned this message a couple of months ago

3. an easy habit into which we can fall is of thinking of ourselves as “a little church” forgetting that we, as a local assembly of believers, are part of an innumerable world wide church
 - a. yet, for a moment, looking just at this local church, we have seen a considerable grown in the number of those attending on Sunday mornings over the past few years
 - b. but there has been one concern for me and for others
 - (A) that though our attendances have increased
 - (B) the number of those who have united in fellowship as members, having their names on the church roll, has remained relatively static
 - c. I should like, therefore, to encourage believers who have been baptized in accordance with the scriptures to take that step of faith and commitment of joining this church

4. now coincidentally and interestingly enough
 - a. at our Deacons' Meeting on this past Wednesday
 - b. and completely separate from these thoughts which I have just expressed and from this message
 - c. a project was proposed and initiated
 - d. to have informal discussions with some of you who have been very faithful in many ways in our midst, but who have yet to join in membership
 - e. to discover what the hindrances may be that are standing in the way of you and others taking that step
 - f. but it could be, that you have some input you would like to make to this project, and want to make sure that you are not overlooked in those that are approached for input; to you, then, I suggest that you let Peter Reist know this

5. today, though, I want to look at this passage from Ephesians and after making some general remarks on the nature of the church, bring out the following truths
 - a. the church as a unity
 - b. the church as a body
 - c. the church as a nation, God's household
 - d. the church as a building, God's temple

B. The Nature of the Church

1. the Church Universal or the Church Local?
 - a. sometimes these are spoken of as the Church Invisible and the Church Visible, respectively: which is self-explanatory
 - b. in the New Testament, I believe, we find that there is a church universal: consisting of all believers everywhere
 - (A) this is found, for example in 2:16 at which we will look at again later, which says that God reconciles Jewish and Gentile Christians "both in one body"
 - (B) this spiritual church of all believers is described in such passages as 1 Corinthians 12:13 (NAS): "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."
 - c. yet it just as equally true that there is a local church: the community of God's people in one place
 - (A) some of the letters that comprise the New Testament were specifically addressed to such churches

- (1) "to the church of God which is at Corinth"
- (2) "to the churches of Galatia"
- (3) "to the church of the Thessalonians"
- (B) and also greetings are sent from or two churches that are meeting in certain residences
 - (1) The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. (1 Corinthians 16:19)
 - (2) Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. (Colossians 4:15)
 - (3) And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house: (Philemon 2)
- (C) and there are in the book of Revelation the letters to the seven churches which were in Asia minor
- d. some take extreme positions on this matter
 - (A) "all that matters is to be part of the church universal"
 - (B) "only the local church is to be found in the Bible"
 - (C) and the truth, as it often does, lies between these two, in that we need to remember both that we are part of a great body of believers world-wide and that we have a duty to the community of believers where we live

2. the Place of Meeting or the People who Meet?

- a. let's deal with this quickly
- b. even from the few passages we have read thus far
- c. the church is not the physical structure with name on the door — which is good for us not having such a place!
- d. but it is the community of those who gather in Jesus' name

3. the Leaders or the Congregation?

- a. another misconception which we should set aside, which is most often voiced in statements starting with the words, "The church should..." which means that its leaders, its pastors, its bishops, its deacons should do such and such
- b. the church is the community of believers as a whole, not the few who hold offices within it: perhaps the better way to express this would be, "We as a church should..."

C. The Church as a Unity

1. Unity of Jew and Gentile ... 2:11-14

- a. now in these verses which we read from Ephesians, the first thing that we find that God has done something
- b. something that involves two diverse groups of people
 - (A) one, the Jews, who have had a relationship with the one true God, and Gentiles, without it
 - (B) the first having the promises of God, the other not
 - (C) the first with, the other without, hope in the world
- c. but in one person, that person being Jesus the Christ
 - (A) by his blood, by his death on the cross
 - (B) these two have been united into one, the church
- d. or, as we find in Galatians 3:28 (NAS) and elsewhere: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

2. Unity of Peace with God and Man ... 2:14–17

- a. now this passage goes on to speak about the enmity that existed between these particular two groups
 - (A) indeed, such an enmity has existed
 - (B) the Jews, on the one hand, forgetting they were to be witnesses to all the nations (Isaiah 43:9–10) sought to live in exclusivity from all other nations
 - (C) and history records how that over the millennia one nation after another has sought to destroy the Jews
- b. yet in One Man, in Jesus Christ, this enmity is slain, verses 14–15 (NIV): For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,
- c. but the basis of this peace is not a peace treaty between nations – you don't have to have lived long to know how soon those can be broken – but rather the reestablishment of the God intended relationship between mankind – both Jew and Gentile – with Himself, verse 16b (NIV): ... to reconcile both of them to God through the cross ...

3. so this is the reason that we can meet here this morning; some old, some young; some British, Canadian, American, some (and I am sure you won't mind me referring to you specifically) Dutch or Columbian or Korean or Brazilian or Chinese; and there are undoubtedly other backgrounds; and still have a unity in the church because we have peace with God

D. The Church as a Body

1. Brought together at the Cross ... 2:16

- a. let's just for a moment go back to the first part of verse 16 (NIV): [and in this one body to reconcile both of them...](#)
- b. and in this words we can see the picture of the church as the universal body of Christ
- c. this is a picture, namely of the church being a body, which is used other places in the New Testament, notably Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 – we have already read a verse from the latter that shows this aspect of the church, a universal body of believers, and here is a similar one from Romans 12:4–5 (NIV): [Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.](#)

2. Reading further in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, however, you discover that many of the injunctions to the members (limbs: ie., feet, arms, hands) of the body can for practical purposes only be carried out in the local body of the church, or between a limited number of such local bodies as happened in Acts when the churches in Greece and Asia sent gifts to the churches in need in Judaea; let's continue reading from Romans 12:6–13 (NIV): [We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practise hospitality.](#)

- a. and as you hear those words, you will see, I think, that many are to do with the personal relationships, those which we have one with another in our local church
- b. these, among others then, are your ministries in the church

3. Sharing one Spirit ... 2:18

- a. as an analogy with the body
- b. so the local church, just as the church universal, shares in one single Spirit: one single source and evidence of Life
- c. 2:18 (NIV): [For through him {that is, Christ Jesus} we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.](#)

4. now, just two last points, both worthy of much fuller study, that we will make before concluding

E. The Church as a Nation, God's Household ... 2:19–20

1. Did you note those wonderful words describing the church in verse 19? Here is how the NIV puts it: [Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God's people and members of God's household](#)
 - a. when you become a believer in Christ, you take on a new citizenship; you become citizens of heaven
 - b. as I say, this subject is worthy of a message in itself, but listen to what Peter had to say on this subject
2. 1 Peter 2:9 (NIV): [But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.](#)
 - a. that's a pretty wonderful situation to be in as a people of God, isn't it? ... that is what the church visible, the local church, is intended to be: a testimony in the words, lives and attitudes of its people to the Saviour God

F. The Church as a Building, God's Temple ... 2:21–22

1. these verses read (NIV): [In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.](#)
 - a. now it may be that I am reading too much into these verses for I see in the first part that the holy temple is the church invisible, universal, made up of all believers everywhere
 - b. and the second part, the "you" is in the plural, but is addressed particularly to the local church, the members of whom as stones are being fitted together into a dwelling place, singular, where God in the Person of His Holy Spirit dwells, a thought which Peter describes

- c. 1 Peter 2:4–5 (NIV): *As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*
2. so, when people come to this assembly, they have a right to expect that they will be able to meet God here, because God's people are being indwelt individually and collectively by God's Holy Spirit – is He living in you? ... does He have freedom in your life to do what God wills?

G. Conclusion

1. what must precede our being part of God's church?
 - a. well, this is discussed in the first 10 verses of this chapter
 - b. and the key verse is, perhaps, verse 8 (NAS), *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"*
 - c. that is the recognition, as we find in verses 1 and 5 that we *"are dead in our trespasses and sins"*
 - d. and that only by turning from our sin and turning to God in faith may we know the assurance of forgiven sins
 - e. and those who do so are made alive, given new life as part of the new birth, becoming part of God's universal church
2. but, every believer, having been born from above
 - a. for the building up and strengthening one of another
 - b. as well as a host of other reasons
 - c. should seek to be part of a group of local believers
3. so, this morning I would leave you with this threefold invitation
 - a. to salvation in Christ
 - b. to believer's baptism
 - c. to uniting with this Church

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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