

Equipping of the Saints

A Holy Temple

Introduction

We've been talking about equipping the saints, "for the work of service," taken from...

Our Basis: Ephesians 4:11-13; 2:17-22 *The underlying support and foundation for our study*

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NKJV, ESV, NASB, NIV)

*And He Himself gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as [shepherds (ESV)] and teachers, ¹² [to equip] the saints for the work of [service (NASB)], for [building up (ESV)] the body of Christ, ¹³ [until (ESV)] we all [attain (ESV)] to **the unity of the faith** and of **the knowledge of the Son of God**, to [become mature (NIV)], to the [whole measure (NIV)] of the fullness of Christ;*

Ephesians 2:17-22 (ESV)

*And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but **you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.***

We noted that Paul used a building construction metaphor

to express church growth. As we investigated this metaphor we saw that Jesus built his church on bedrock, the firmest material on which to lay a foundation. And Jesus himself is the cornerstone laid on the Rock that aligns the rest of the foundation, noting that the cornerstone is also part of the foundation. So Jesus is the Rock, the cornerstone and foundation of his church. We wondered, once we have the foundation, that has been given to us, which is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11), what do we build on top of it. After all the foundation isn't a completed construction. So, what goes on top?

Next we looked at the common view of the unity of faith

addressed in 1 Corinthians where the brethren were divided. Paul flatly tells them, *"I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment."* (1 Corinthians 1:10). We are to love one another, live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:10,16) and that there be no division in the body, (1 Corinthians 12:25). And that is definitely a major point. Nothing can destroy a church faster than division. I've seen plenty of churches split during my lifetime. We need to strive for unity.

However, the last Sunday morning that I spoke we looked at...

Another view of the unity of the faith...

that the Bible describes in our attempt to determine what to build on the foundation that is Jesus Christ. Paul tells us that this other unity is represented by the union of a husband and wife in Ephesians 5:22-32, where we found mention of this mysterious union, *unio mystica*. Paul says, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."³² **This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.** (Ephesians 5:31,32). This **mysterious union is the union of Christ and His church!** The unity of the faith.

We asked last time, if the union of a husband and wife is "one flesh," then what is the union of Christ and his church? Paul answers this question when he instructed the Corinthians on why they shouldn't participate with temple prostitutes in 1 Corinthians 6:13b-20.

We will only read verses 15-17 & 19.

1 Corinthians 6:15-17,19 (NIV)

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!¹⁶ Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."

The mysterious fleshly union, "The two will become one flesh." Even in an unauthorized union.

Paul continues in verse 17...

¹⁷

But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

And there it is: *unio mystica*, the mysterious union and the answer to: what is the union of Christ and his church? We could say, "and the two will become one spirit." But, Paul says it this way, "whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit."

And then Paul makes the connection with our study on equipping the saints in Ephesians. We are looking for what we can build on top of the foundation that has been given to us, the foundation that is Jesus Christ and Paul tells us in verse 19.

¹⁹

*Do you not know that **your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;***

Without verse 19, we might think verse 17 was a metaphor. That is, "whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit", we might think it means that if we "joined" Christ, ie. became a Christian, then we'll have the same spirit. Almost as if we were on a sports team or a business team and we all have the same "team spirit."

I've been experimenting with ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence application available to the public, asking it various questions to see how it would respond. Mostly questions about my computer or asking for recipe suggestions for dinner, nothing very serious. But lately, I have been asking a variety of religious questions. It is very aware of the religious world. And it has some good answers. Applicable to this lesson I asked it: "What is meant by team spirit?"

Here is its reply:

"Team spirit" refers to the feelings of camaraderie, trust, and mutual respect among members of a group working together towards a common goal. It embodies the collective enthusiasm, loyalty, and motivation of the team members, often resulting in a positive and productive working environment. Key aspects of team spirit include:

1. **Cohesion:** Members feel a sense of belonging and unity.
2. **Collaboration:** Team members work well together, share responsibilities, and support each other.
3. **Motivation:** The team collectively strives towards achieving shared goals and objectives.
4. **Trust:** There is mutual trust and confidence in each other's abilities and intentions.
5. **Communication:** Open, honest, and effective communication is maintained within the team.
6. **Respect:** Members respect each other's ideas, contributions, and differences.
7. **Enthusiasm:** A positive attitude and enthusiasm for the team's work and goals are prevalent.

But this is not what Paul is saying when he talks about being joined or united with Christ and being one with Him in spirit. And by-the-way, I chose to use the NIV translation for this verse because they are the only translation that says "united." All the other translations say "joined" and I wanted a clearer connection to the union of Christ and His church. The Greek word translated "united" or "joined" actually means "glue; to glue, unite." according to Strong's dictionary.

We are flatly told in verse 19, that the bodies of believers are temples of the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit is in us. Which makes sense because, as we will see, a temple is a house where God dwells.

And in actuality he told us this also in Ephesians 2:19-22. And I want us to focus on the next two phrases as we read the passage.

A Holy Temple, A Dwelling Place for God by the Spirit

So leading off with our basis scripture:

Ephesians 2:19-22 (ESV)

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but **you are** fellow citizens with the saints and members of **the household of God**,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,²¹ in whom **the whole structure**, being joined together, **grows into a holy temple in the Lord**.²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

Look at these terms to express characteristics of the saints:

- Members of the **household** of God.
In the Greek that's actually, *the house of God*. Like when Joshua says, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." as he's asking Israel to choose whom they will serve, the Lord or the gods of the lands around them in Joshua 24:15.

- **The whole structure,**
some translations say "building." Being joined together. Another way of saying that is: being *united* together. What is the structure or building? The house of God.
- Grows into a **holy temple** in the Lord.
Here's the connection. We are a temple of the Lord. And as revealed in other passages, our bodies are temples of the Lord.
- **You** also (individuals collectively) **are being built together**
The idea of unity again. The members are united, but the next phrase makes it clear that the union extends to God and the Spirit.
- Into **a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.**
A place where God dwells by the Spirit. If our bodies are a temple of the Lord and a temple is a dwelling place of God then God dwells in us, His holy temple.

You, the Temple, and Your Body

- **You are the temple**

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (NKJV)

Do you not know that **you are the temple of God** and that **the Spirit of God dwells in you?**
¹⁷ If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, **which temple you are.**

- **Your body is the temple...** (*It's NOT just an intellectual exercise*)

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NKJV)

Or do you not know that **your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you**, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Your essence, who you are, is NOT your body. I know it's easy to get caught up in our physicalness, it's all we know. But, your essence IS your soul.

Doug Hamilton, preacher at the Junction City, KS, COC says:

"Our soul, our inner being, encompass[es] our sexuality, personal preferences, intentions, knowledge and memories. If we desire to have a steak, it is because our '**soul desires** to eat flesh'.

Deuteronomy 12:20 (NASB)

When the LORD your God extends your border as He has promised you, and you say, "I will eat meat," because [your soul desires] to eat meat, then you may eat meat, whatever you desire.

"When we long for God, it is our soul which thirsts for Him (**Psalm 63:1**). The knowledge of being fearfully and wonderfully made is captured in the soul (**Psalm 139:14**). When you remember someone who has passed, it is your soul which remembers (**Lamentations 3:20**). Our soul is the real version of ourselves, being our 'inner man' (**Ephesians 3:16**).

"The body cannot live without the spirit of life and neither can the soul. According to the scriptures, when our physical body dies, the soul dis-associates from the body, taking the spirit of life with it. It is the spirit of life that keeps the soul alive, eternally alive, for it was what made man a 'living soul' (Genesis 2:7). The 'spirit of life' that God has connected to our souls makes it possible to continue to eternal life or eternal damnation."

Paul isn't the first to mention this relationship of the body with the temple.

- **Jesus and the temple of his body**

In John 2:13-22 (ESV), we read this:

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵ And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

*¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking about **the temple of his body**. ²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.*

This is interesting. I didn't truly understand what is being said here until last night. Maybe you saw it and good for you if you did. Two temples are under discussion here. The Jews are speaking of one temple and Jesus is speaking of another temple... his body. Jesus is not speaking about the temple in Jerusalem that was built after the return from the 70 years captivity. He's speaking the entire time about his body! Verse 21 says that, but verse 21 is NOT restricted to Jesus' body after the resurrection, that is, "in three days I will raise it up." He's also talking about his body when he says, "Destroy this temple (ie his body)..." And the Jews will be the ones, through the manipulation of the Romans, that will kill Jesus (ie. destroy this temple of his body).

What else that is interesting here is if a temple is where God dwells and Jesus body is a temple then God dwells in the body of Jesus. And isn't that what Paul tells the Colossians?

Colossians 2:9 (NKJV)

*For in [Jesus] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead **bodily**;*

Ever wonder why that word "bodily" was there? How about when Jesus put on flesh and the Godhead, including him dwelt in his body, his body became a temple of the Lord! What do you think?

And this brings up another very interesting point...

Temples Made With Hands

- **Paul in Athens at the Areopagus**

Before the intellectual elites of his day made this argument in...

Acts 17:24,25 (NKJV)

*God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, **does not dwell in temples made with hands.** ²⁵ Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.*

So, we are told here that God doesn't dwell in manmade temples (houses, structures, buildings). So, where does he dwell? Maybe in temples He made. Paul tells the Corinthians...

2 Corinthians 6:16 (NKJV)

*And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For **you are the temple of the living God.** As God has said:*

"I will dwell in them (Exodus 29:45)

And walk among them. (Leviticus 26:12)

I will be their God, (Jeremiah 31:33b)

And they shall be My people." (Jeremiah 31:33b; 32:38)

So, God dwells in temples he has made not in those that man has made, made with hands. Acts 17:24,25 is not the first mention of temples made with hands...

- **Stephen before the council and High Priest.**

Acts 7:48-50 (ESV)

Yet the Most High does **not** dwell in **houses made by hands**, as the prophet says,

⁴⁹

*"Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.*

***What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord,
or what is the place of my rest?***

⁵⁰

Did not my hand make all these things?"

Doesn't this sound like what Paul said in Acts 17? Notice the event. Following Stephen's defense before the council he will be stoned to death. And the scripture says this about that event...

Acts 7:57-59 (NKJV)

*Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at [Stephen] with one accord; ⁵⁸ and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of **a young man named Saul.** ⁵⁹ And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."*

Saul (later called Paul) was there. He witnessed the speech and stoning of Stephen. Wonder where he got the idea that God doesn't dwell in houses (temples) made by hands? Just saying...

The Tent That Is Our Earthly Home

2 Corinthians 5:1-7 (ESV)

For we know that if **the tent** that is our **earthly home** is destroyed, we have a **building from God, a house not made with hands**, eternal in the heavens. ² For in **this tent** we groan, longing to **put on our heavenly dwelling**, ³ if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are still in **this tent**, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be **unclothed**, but that we would be **further clothed**, so that what is **mortal** may be swallowed up by **life**. ⁵ He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

⁶ So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are **at home in the body** we are **away from the Lord**, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight.

Look at the terms:

Tent	Earthly home	Building from God
A house not made with hands	Put on our heavenly dwelling	Unclothed
Further clothed	Mortal	Life
At home in the body	Away from the Lord	We walk by faith, not by sight <i>(We cannot see the spiritual realm)</i>

We see from...

2 Corinthians 5:1,6

Tent, Earthly home, at home in the body, So, Tent = Earthly Home = the Body.

Our body is the mortal tent where our soul dwells while on the earth.

2 Corinthians 5:1,2

Building from God = A house not made with hands = Our heavenly dwelling

Our heavenly dwelling is an eternal house not made with hands in which our soul will be further clothed.

This idea of a tent

Is interesting because it's another association we can make.

Our body is a temple, God's house built by Moses, being direct by God and with plans from God.	our body is a tent God planned a tabernacle. A TENT!!
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Here's a thought, if our earthly body is a tent, then maybe, that mansion God is preparing for us is that immortal body Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 15. What do you think?

A Work in Progress

This series of studies on the equipping of the saints is a work in progress. While I knew we and our bodies were a temple of the Lord, I wasn't aware that we being a temple had anything to do with the equipping of the saints or the growth of the church. It seemed like just a label, like any one of those other terms we know. You know, like "Christian," "Justified," "A Royal Priesthood," etc.

But that it does have something to do with our spiritual growth can be seen in our basis scripture,...

Ephesians 2:19-22

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but **you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,**²⁰ **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,**²¹ in whom **the whole structure, being joined together,***

And here it is... we GROW into...

***grows into a holy temple in the Lord.**²² In him*

And again, we are BEING built into, WE are a work in progress...

you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

I'm just pretty much at the beginning of looking into our role as the temple of the Lord. I exhort you to do your own study into this also.

Jesus has tasked the leadership of the church to equip the saints. It is our responsibility, as saints, to become equipped for our work of service, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to **the unity of the faith** and of **the knowledge of the Son of God**, to become mature, to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

And with God's help and through our Lord Jesus Christ may we do just that!