



**The New You
Ephesians 2:11-22
Westport Christian Church
November 8, 2009**

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom 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.2:11-22)

New and improved. There is something contagiously alluring about the statement. Obviously, research has shown that the American people like the idea. Manufacturers go all out to produce products they can describe as new and improved. And the reason, of course, is to make money. They are able to make money because we want things that are new. We want a new and improved dishwashing liquid. We want a new and improved weed killer. We want a new and improved hair color. Some of you even want new hair --- or any hair! We want a new figure. We want a new car. And the list can go on and on and on. We like new things.

All of this points to the biggest need people have. It is the need for a new life. The reason why so many people are dissatisfied with what they have is because they are dissatisfied with who they are.

This is the need that Paul has been addressing in his letter to the Ephesians. The glorious reality of who we have become in Christ has been the topic of these first three chapters. In Christ all things are made new. In Christ we have a new identity. And on the first few pages of Paul's letter to the Ephesians you come face to face with the new you.

What we believe about ourselves will determine how we behave and how we live. If our self-image is determined by what we failed to achieve before we met Christ, then we will find ourselves caught up in a downward spiral of despair. But, if our self-image is determined by what God's Word says we are in Christ, then we will be able to mount up with wings as eagles and soar to the heights. So, it is important that we come face to face with the reality of our new life in Christ in all of it's implications.

Our text today gives us a short list of several new and improved relationships the believer has in Christ. This is part of our new identity in Christ --- the new you.

I. We Are Citizens In A New Kingdom

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints . . .” (2:19a, NAS)

Sometimes it's hard to fully realize that we're citizens in a new kingdom. But that's what Paul is saying---that we are citizens in a new kingdom. The Bible says that we are fellow citizens with the saints. Before we met Christ we were strangers and aliens. The word strangers could also be translated as foreigners. We were foreigners, strangers and aliens, to the Kingdom of God.

What this passage has in view is our allegiance to a new kingdom. It is the Kingdom of God. In fact, the Gospel is a Gospel of the Kingdom. We

find John the Baptist declaring in “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 3:2 Jesus Himself teaches us to pray in Matthew 6:10, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

When we come to Christ, we enter the Kingdom of God. And what is this kingdom? It is the place where God rules. When you come to Christ, you submit yourself to the rule of God. Those who refuse to submit themselves to that rule have not really come to Christ and if they are fooling anyone it’s only themselves because they certainly aren’t fooling God. True believers enter the Kingdom because they enter into a relationship to God whereby they surrender their rights and submit to His rule. That is what the Kingdom of God is all about.

We are now citizens of that kingdom. It must be remembered that in the ancient world citizenship was very important. One took a great deal of pride in being a citizen of a prominent city. In fact, they internalized the laws and customs of the city of which they were citizens. When they met an inhabitant of that city in a strange place, they considered that person to be a friend. Citizenship was highly personal, and provided a distinctive identity for the person holding it. In Paul's day, Roman citizenship was a prized possession. With it came certain rights and privileges not afforded non-citizens. In Paul's travels, he used his Roman citizenship to his advantage on several occasions. But here he is saying that we are now part of a new city, or kingdom. He underscores this fact again in Philippians 3:20, where he says, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now the challenge is to see ourselves as part of this new kingdom. Being fellow citizens with the saints means that we also are saints. We may not always feel like saints, but the Bible says we are and we have a need to act like what we are.

II. We Are Members In A New Family.

“. . . and are of God's household.” (2:19b)

God is not finished yet. Paul takes it a step farther by saying we are members in a new family. We are of God's household. In Christ we have a new family. We are brought into the inner circle of relationships.

You see, citizenship in a state is important but not intimate. When we are told we are of God's household, it means we have now entered into the most intimate of relationships as members of the family of God. Those who are in this family are our brothers and sisters in Christ. And these relationships in the family of God enable us to have our needs met on a far deeper level. We can now be accepted fully, loved freely, greeted

warmly, and encourage daily. This is what families are for. Someone defined home as the place where, when you show up, they have to let you in. So, it should be with the family of God. It is God's redemptive community. We don't always agree, and sometimes members of that family get bent out of shape, or headed in the wrong direction, but we are still family. And if we are truly family, then we can touch each other on the deepest of levels, and meet the most pressing of needs.

Physically speaking, we have certain genetic characteristics passed on to us by our parents. In the spiritual family of God we have the characteristics of our new life passed on to us by our Heavenly Father. This is why it is so important to make sure that those who enter the organization of the church have already entered into that organic union of the new birth. Unless people are born again they do not receive the spiritual characteristics of Christ. And if, somehow, they manage to get into the organization, they become an alien force in the family, and out of harmony with the family.

This, of course, can create all kinds of problems, and can destroy the unity and fellowship of the family. If we have been born again, then we have the nature of Christ growing up inside of us. We are submissive to God's rule over our lives. His Word is read and obeyed. And we enter into this intimate relationship with God and one another. We come into the place where we are practically encouraging one another to be more like Christ. We support one another. We lift up one another. We bear one another's burdens. We forgive one another. We even cover the sins of one another through prayer, for the Bible says that "love covers a multitude of sins." This is the new and improved, intimate relationship we have entered into by knowing Christ. We have become members of a new family --- the family of God.

III. We Are Also Living Stones In A New Temple

“. . . having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom 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.
(2:20-22)

Here the apostle moves on to a new figure. It is the picture of a temple. It is the temple of God. But it is not a physical temple made with hands. This temple is a spiritual temple in which we are the living stones. As living stones we are being fitted together as we are growing into a holy temple in the Lord. This temple into which we are being built together is in fact a dwelling of God in the Spirit. The apostles and prophets have laid the foundation for this temple with Christ Jesus Himself being the

corner stone.

In 1 Peter 2:5 we read, "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." The picture we have is of a holy temple which is a dwelling of God in the Spirit and which is made of us as living stones. What a dynamic image it is! This is not the picture of a temple made of bricks which are all alike. This is a stone edifice. Each stone is different. But each stone is necessary. Each stone comes as is, but, just as a stone mason chips and shapes each piece, the Master chisels us into a right and proper shape to be fitted in where we can be the most useful. It says here that we are being fitted together by God. This is the picture we have.

And isn't this precisely what God is doing in our lives? He is conforming us to Christ. And the One in charge of giving us gifts and talents with which to serve also sets the terms and conditions! Here they are! (hold up the Bible)

But what are the implications of being these living stones? What is the purpose for which this temple is being built? Our text says that this temple is a dwelling of God in the Spirit. The passage we read in 1 Peter indicates that it is "a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5)

In other words, this new temple is built to contain the presence of the living God, and we are not only to contain His presence but to respond to that presence as people who do His bidding. The fact is that in Christ we now have a new purpose in life. We have been turned into a royal priesthood so that we might offer up spiritual sacrifices of praise. We are told in Hebrews 13:15, "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." We are created to worship Him.

That is the new purpose for every believer. Not only are our lives to show forth praise to God, but our lips are also to praise Him. This is one of the marks of true Christianity. People who never get excited about their walk with God don't have a walk with God to be excited about. But those who have entered into a living relationship with a living God will have a living faith and a living praise.

In Christ, we are citizens of a new kingdom --- we have a new allegiance.

In Christ, we are members in a new family --- we have a new fellowship. And in Christ, we are living stones in a new temple --- we have a new

purpose, a life of praise to God. If you know Christ this is the new you.

Amen!