

RESULTS OF THE GREAT CHANGE

Ephesians 2.19-22: Message 18, A change... to grow in holiness

God has changed us in Christ.

- (v11-12) In time past we were far from God, without hope in this world.
- (v13) But now it's different: (v14-18) Now, because of Christ's sinless life and sacrificial death we have been reconciled to God (made near, now no longer His enemies).
- God has changed us in Christ and that means: (v19-22) Life is now different. What does that mean...?

If we are different (changed, made new in Christ), then we will (we ought to) live differently.

- The radical change God wrought in us at salvation will have some radical effects on how we live.
- (v19a) “Now therefore...” life is different because we are in Christ, near to God.
- How are we supposed to live, then? How will we live since we have been made nigh to God in Christ?

I. (v19) We are made new in Jesus Christ

A. (v19a) First, we are made citizens of God's kingdom

1. (v12) In time past we were aliens (foreigners) and strangers to God and His kingdom.
2. But not anymore: In Christ we are now fellow-citizens with all the other saints.
3. (Col 1.12-14) We have been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God.
4. (Php 3.20-21) And that means that now our “conversation” (our life, our citizenship) is in heaven.
 - a) This world is not our home; this country is not our permanent residence.
 - b) Being made nigh unto God in Christ means being separated from worldly ties—we are now citizens of heaven (God's kingdom, God's country). There is where our loyalties lie.

B. (v19b) Second, we are made members of God's family

1. (v2-3) In time past we were members of the devil's family: children of disobedience and of wrath.
2. But now, in Christ, it's different because we have been made new, born again (spiritually) by the Holy Spirit of God.
3. We are now sons of God and, because of that, members of His household.
 - a) And so we see again that this world (with all its temptations and trappings) is not our home.
 - b) (John 14.1-3) We have a home in heaven, and we should live like it. Don't set down deep roots in this world—don't invest in things that will simply be left behind when you die.
 - c) Invest in your new home (invest in eternity): Live for your permanent house in heaven.
 - d) And when we talk about living for eternity, we need to remember one thing: ***It's never enough.***
 - (1) Whatever your effort is today to live for eternity, it's not enough. But, it ought to be more than that last year. And next year it ought to be more than this year.
 - (2) The goal is never to “arrive” but rather to grow. We will be able to say, “I've done enough.” After all the Lord has done for us, it is never enough.
 - (3) The goal is always to grow and that means we ought to always be uncomfortable with the status quo (with where we are today), and be striving to do more (to be more like Christ).

C. (v20-22) Third, and most importantly, we are made an holy temple in the Lord

1. Paul only just mentioned our new citizenship in God's Kingdom and our new home in heaven (he gave one small phrase to each in one verse of this passage).
 - a) And now he spends three entire verses on one thing: We are to be an holy temple in the Lord.
 - b) Here is where we see the major focus of this entire passage that finishes Ephesians 2: Here is where we see the clear results of our “change in Christ” (the theme of chapter 2).
 - c) We have been made into the Temple of God, and the Temple of God is... *holy*.
2. Here is where we see there results of the change God made in us, and therefore the goal of our life.
 - a) We have been made (in Christ) into the holy Temple of God. That is what we are in Christ.
 - b) Therefore, we ought to *grow in holiness*.
 - (1) This is the essence of all discipleship: To grow (here and now, in this world and in this body) into what we *are* in Jesus Christ.
 - (2) Our goal is to make our “practice” in this world match our “position” in Christ. It is to become in character and conduct what are already are in our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (3) Christ *is* our holiness and we *are* made holy in Christ, therefore we ought to grow in holiness—we ought to become more and more holy each day.
 - (4) We are the holy Temple of God, and so we ought to grow in holiness!

II. (v20-21) We are made to grow in Christ

A. (v20b) Growth begins with salvation: Christ is the Cornerstone

1. Before the foundation is set, the “key stone” must be placed. It is the foundation of the foundation.
2. And there is no holiness, no Temple of God in man, without salvation because Christ is our holiness—Christ is the only way God can come and dwell in sinful man (Christ made the way).

B. (v20a) Growth is based on Scripture: The Bible is our Foundation

1. The writings of the Apostles and the Prophets form the foundation upon which we build. If we want to grow in Christ—in holiness—we must grow “upon” the Word of God.
2. (Luke 6.46-49) We need to *learn* and *obey* the Scripture.
 - a) And here again we need to understand that *it is never enough*. You will never have enough knowledge of the Bible and you will never obey enough of what you know of the Bible.
 - b) But, the goal is to arrive but rather to grow: You ought to know more about the Bible this year than last, and you ought to be obeying more this year last.
 - c) And even with that, you ought to be bothered by the fact that you don't know enough of the the Bible and that you are not obeying enough of what you know.
 - d) The moment you “arrive” and think you know enough or think you are obeying enough... is the day you step out of the will of God because it will be the day you stop striving to grow.
3. (1Cor 3.10-15) And remember that even though God has placed other people in your life to help you “build the temple,” (to grow in holiness and Christ-likeness), *you* are the one who is primarily responsible for *you* (v14: “...which *he* hath built...”).
 - a) The pastor and the church (other members of the Body of Christ) can help you—they can provide the tools and the materials—but *you* are responsible for the *labor*.
 - b) You are responsible to put forth the effort to grow—to learn the Bible and do what it says.
4. And remember that our growth has a goal...

C. (v21) Growth has a goal: Holiness

1. God's plan is to grow us in holiness, and He compares that growth process to the building of the Temple.
 - a) The building of the Temple was not done overnight. It took time and effort. They built the Temple stone by stone, little by little, working toward the goal of having an “holy Temple.”
 - b) While we are still in this body in this world, we will never “arrive” but we should always be striving to grow a little more (to place one more stone upon the foundation).
 - c) Until Christ comes for us and finishes the good work that He started in us, we ought to always be striving to grow in holiness just a little more—to grow just a little more in Christ-likeness.
2. And so we need to understand what *holiness* implies:
 - a) (2Tim 2.22) Holiness implies a separation *from* something, but it at the same time it implies a separation *to* something. We separate *from* sin *to* righteousness.
 - It's not just about “not doing the bad,” but also about “doing the good.”
 - b) (Rom 1.1) And we are not just “separated from” the world, sin, and self; we are “separated unto” the Gospel—unto the work of Gospel (the progress of the Gospel in the world).
 - c) (John 17.15-18) Holiness is *not* isolation from the world.
 - (1) You are called to be holy (God's plan is to sanctify you through His Word) so that He might use you out in this world for the progress of the Gospel.
 - (2) We need to grow in holiness (separation from sin unto the Gospel), not isolation.
 - (3) And that means we need to be in the Word and in the world—we need to learn the Bible and obey the Bible while we spend time around lost people (for their salvation).
 - d) Holiness is growing in Christ-likeness by reading the Bible and doing what it says... while living in the world for the progress of the Gospel.

III. (v22) We are made to grow together

A. In order to grow in Christ (in holiness), we have to be “builted together.”

1. This means we need the local church and we need the fellowship with other believers who just might be a little different than we are.
2. God's design for our growth is clear: We need the Bible, yes (it is our foundation). But we also need other believers—the fellowship of the saints.
3. God's design is that we grow *together*, as a body, and in a body the members complement each other because they are different.

B. Therefore, in order to grow, we need the *differences* among us.

1. (1Cor 12.18) Every member of the Body of Christ is different *by God's design*.
2. So, stop poking your brother (or sister) in the eye just because he is not like you.
 - a) You need that person (just like God made him, just how God placed him in the Body of Christ), so that you can grow.
 - b) And that person needs you so that he might continue to grow in Christ.
3. We are different (in personalities, gifts, etc.) and we need those differences so that we can grow in holiness (in Christ) and in turn help others to grow also.
4. So, don't expect everyone to be just like you. Different is okay; different is God's plan and design.

Conclusion: Being made near to God in Christ means a change in our lives and in our lifestyles—it means growing in holiness!

We have been made holy in Christ (that is our “position”), therefore we ought to grow in holiness (that ought to be our “practice”).

- (1Kg 6.1, 7) When they were building the Temple in the Old Testament, no one heard the racket and sounds of the construction.
 - ✓ But they could see the progress: Stone by stone, little by little, the holy Temple of the Lord was built upon the firm foundation laid deep in the earth.
- (1Jn 3.2) Today it's much the same in the building of the Temple—in our growth in holiness and Christ-likeness: People around us might not “hear” the distinct sounds of the construction.
 - ✓ (1Jn 3.3) But they ought to be able to see the progress: This year you ought to be more like Christ than last, and next year you ought to have grown a bit more than this one.

Our goal in this world is not “perfection”—we will not “arrive” (be completely holy) until Christ comes.

- Our goal here and now is to grow: To grow in Christ (to be like Him in character and conduct) just a little more this year than last.
 - ✓ And we ought to always be *bothered* by the fact that “it's never enough.” And so we labor and strive and plan to do more. Always.
 - ✓ That is the result of the great change that God has wrought in us through Jesus Christ (the theme of Ephesians 2). In a word: **Holiness**.
- God has made us new in Jesus Christ and His purpose in doing so is to make us like Jesus Christ.
 - ✓ Is that your purpose in life? Or are you living for something else?
 - ✓ If you are living for something else: Why? Death will rob you of all that is precious to you in this world. But death can never rob you of the investments you have made in eternity.
 - Strive to grow in Christ (in your knowledge of the Bible and in your obedience to it).
 - And then strive to live holy: separate from sin, separated unto God for the progress of the Gospel in the world.
 - Then never let yourself get satisfied and complacent with the status quo. Be bothered by the fact that it is never enough. Then strive for more: Strive for more holiness.