



St Paul's Dorking Small Groups – 10th May 2009

More Love, More Power - Key expressions: Being built into a temple

Read:

Ephesians 2:11-22 (See also Colossians 3-11, and Galatians 3-26- 28, and particularly 2 Cor 5:18-21 and Colossians 1:15-23)

Key points from Sunday's sermon

The passage this week takes us through a journey. 1) How things were in the past, 2) What Christ did, and therefore achieved 3) How the new community now is. **The passage helps us reflect on what sort of community God is building among us and how we might better express Him.**

1. Key expressions of the past (Eph 2:11-14). Paul reminds his readers, both Jew and Gentile, how things were formerly. There was a double division - Jews and Gentiles and God and man. The enmity between Jew and Gentile was the most visible of these two divisions and was seen in the following;

- **A wall of hostility** (v.14). Quite literally there was a wall that separated the Jews from the Gentiles in the Temple courts. Archaeological finds in 1871 and 1935 have discovered carved stone signs that were placed around this dividing wall that in effect read "*Trespassers will be executed!*"
- **A label of contempt** (the "uncircumcised" v11) - The Jews with total disdain referred to Gentiles as "the uncircumcised".
- **A list of disqualifications**. A list of negative factors had defined what the Gentiles were. William Hendrickson summed this up as; "Christless, stateless, friendless, hopeless and Godless." (v12-13)

2. Key impact of Christ's work (Eph 2:14-18). Paul outlines the impact of all that Christ achieved to reconcile both of the divisions. This work is for all, both Jew and Gentile and as Paul further outlines in Galatians 3:28 ALL... are one in Christ. His work can be summed up as follows;

- We have been **Rescued from predicament, Reconciled to a Father and Related to a new community**.
- **Jesus has abolished** both the regulations of the ceremonial law and the condemnation of the moral law, both were divisive and both were put aside on the cross.
- **Jesus has created** a new humanity – the first humanity 's peace and unity was destroyed by sin, the second humanity now has the potential once again to be at one with God ... in Christ and therefore be at one in a new community together...all reconciled in equality before God.

3. Key expressions of the new community (Eph 2:19-22). Paul outlines the new status and benefits of this new community. We are now part of...

- **God's kingdom** - His rule
- **God's family** - His unity
- **God's new temple** - His focal point (Just as the old Temple was a focal point but not a "container" so the church is a focal point not a container)
- WE are... the **visible expression of the invisible Christ** and God dwells in us by His spirit. (v.22) (Just as Christ was the visible expression of the invisible God so too the body of Christ is the visible expression of the now risen Christ see Col 1:15-23)

4. So what does this mean for us?

- We need to beware of walls (Do we put "barriers" in the way of people coming to Christ) and do we "label" people with our own prejudices, taboos, and fears?
- There is a new energy behind what God is building among us and there are new key expressions of how God is working out His purposes amongst us (Early Bird Cafe, Besom, Work Out, Prayer Pals, Time Together, Small Groups etc.) do we sense this?
- There is a new ambition to grow together and to grow outwards and upwards (v21) ...We need to get out more!
- Are we ready to join in? What may hold us back?

Questions to discuss:

1. **Icebreaker**. Which group of people do you find most easy to dislike? Your answer could be serious or fun, e.g. Liverpool fans!
2. The Jews had erected a physical barrier between themselves and the Gentiles in the temple courts. We are more likely to create emotional barriers between ourselves and others. Discuss together what you think the are barriers that we may have consciously or unconsciously built at St Paul's.
3. In Christ, ALL are of equal standing and ALL are loved and reconciled by God but we often label people or allow our own fears, prejudices, or awkwardness to stand in the way of truly loving others as Christ loves them. Discuss what your experience of this has been and how you feel about this and how we can help one another be more inclusive and loving.
4. "*We love because he first loved us*"(1 Jn 4:19) Do you think that if we had a deeper appreciation of what Christ has done for us to reconcile us that we would be more compelled to have this reconciling passion? How might we develop this? (Read 2 Cor 5: 18-21)
5. Do you sense God is building something new among us at the moment? What is exciting you?
6. How might we better express Christ as a community-to become a clearer expression of the invisible Christ?
7. We often 'sit it out' and stand on the edges or sit on the fence. Why do we do that, what holds us back?
8. As a group or as individuals share and/or commit to what you feel God is calling you to 'join in with' in His work at this time?