**Ephesians 2:11-22**

**Theme: On Christ, God builds for Himself one spiritual house from all His children**

**Introduction**

How do you build a house? First, you look for suitable places to build—places that are safe, have good stable ground, and are in a good neighborhood. Then you buy the land and remove anything that doesn't fit your house plan. The right building materials must be chosen and bought. The next step is to measure and pour foundations. Slowly but surely, every brick is mortared onto each other until, with the roof, it forms a house.

God is also busy building a house for Himself. The theme for today's sermon is: **On Christ, God builds for Himself one spiritual house from all His children.**

Now, let’s look together at how God goes about building His house.

**A Safe Place to Build**

We don't need to wonder long about this aspect of God's building plan. There is only one safe place where God can build a spiritual house for Himself. We learn this from the preceding sections of this letter. Look quickly at the first part of chapter one: **in Christ, through Christ, under Christ.** Yes, Christ is the only stable, safe place upon which God can build. Hear how Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 3:11: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."

So, we know that the place is good, sturdy, and safe.

**The Building Material for God's House**

Unlike earthly builders, God doesn't use dead, cold stones, but living stones. Yes, He uses people, and therefore we must admit, brothers and sisters, that **God doesn't really have the best material to work with.**

Paul explains the condition of this building material in verses 11 and 12:

* Gentiles
* Without Christ
* Without hope
* Without promises
* Without a place

He speaks specifically here to believers who come from paganism because they didn't even know about the promises of salvation that God had given to His people through the ages. Yet, in the first part of chapter 2, he already pointed out that the Jews were also unusable building material because they allowed themselves to be led by the devil.

But how does God manage to build a house for Himself with weak, rejected building material? He manages because He gave His Son the command to prepare the building material, to upgrade it and make it ready for His building plan. Hear how He does this in verse 13: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Paul places great emphasis on the **change that occurs in a Christian.** The Greek here means a total change from an independent, separate life to an intimate, personal, and close relationship with God. Being one with Christ has life-changing consequences for those with whom it happens / for the building material. Paul explains these consequences in the next few verses.

He states the fact in verse 14: **Christ is our peace.** Literally, this means that Christ is our state of calm and harmony. But why is this necessary? Our text shows that **enmity exists on two levels.**

In the first place, he means the enmity between Jews and non-Jews—circumcised and uncircumcised, or put differently, those who adhere to the Law of Moses and those who do not. Jesus Christ, however, made these two groups one again. How should we understand this? According to verse 14, His death made it so that there no longer needed to be a dividing wall between the two groups. Paul refers here to the physical wall that was around the temple. It was a wall that prevented anyone who was not a Jew from participating in the temple rituals. Even pagans who converted to the Jewish faith could only stand outside and watch sacrifices being offered for sin. But through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, all believers can now fully participate in the joy of His salvation.

But he goes even further in verse 15: "He has abolished the Law with its commandments and ordinances." How now? Don't be alarmed, beloved, Paul doesn't mean the 10 commandments that God Himself gave. He means the ceremonial laws that Moses instituted to clearly distinguish the Israelites from other nations. These are things like the feast days, sacrifices, and rules about what could and could not be eaten. These laws, which previously caused separation between Jews and non-Jews, are now abolished. The way Jesus did this was by making peace. Now there are no longer Jewish believers and non-Jewish believers – no, there are only followers of Christ, because when we believe in Jesus, He brings us together as **new people.**

But what does this new humanity mean for us? Hear what the Holy Spirit says in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

This means, brother and sister, that there are no first-class and second-class disciples or A-grade and B-grade building material of God. Regardless of gender, culture, age, or status, all who believe in Christ form one new humanity, **one in Christ.** If Christ broke down this separation between believers from different backgrounds through His death, we may not keep it in place ourselves. We would do so if we looked down on people who recently came to faith. We would do so by distinguishing who may hear the Word of God here or there. We would do so by elevating customs and preferences to laws and principles. Therefore, the keyword of this new humanity is **PEACE.**

Yet Christ takes this peace even further, because both Jews and non-Jews are in yet another enmity. This is the **enmity with God the Father as a result of sin.** God hates sin. And Christ also puts an end to this enmity, as verse 16 teaches: "By the cross, he put to death their hostility and reconciled both of them to God in one body." So there is no longer enmity between us and God, thanks to Jesus. In this way, all the children of God now become usable building material in the same house.

As prophesied in the Old Testament, Jesus indeed comes to earth as the Prince of Peace. He Himself came to live out the message of peace. The result of His message of peace, according to verse 18, is that disciples of Jesus have **free access to God.** The dividing wall of sin has been broken down. No priest needs to bring sacrifices on behalf of others anymore; no, everyone has direct access to the Father. Do you believe this, also of yourself? Do you believe that you are one with God through Jesus' work?

Because this way, dear brother and sister, Jesus Christ transforms this unusable building material that we were, into usable material that is sanded, chiseled, and shaped by His message of peace, and bought by His death and resurrection. He makes us usable.

The important thing, therefore, is that usable building material is formed into a **unity through peace.** We must always strive for this peace. I cannot afford to live in enmity with other believers, because then I weaken the building work and might perhaps myself be rejected.

**The Building Process**

In verse 19, Paul declares based on the work of Christ: "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household." Believing children have an official place of belonging; they are now citizens. Furthermore, it's not just a house of God, but a **household** – people who also belong to each other through the blood of Jesus.

So what do you and I do with this? We must realize that in Jesus' blood, we are brothers and sisters to each other. Again, the emphasis on **unity.** It is a unity that we must strive for and preserve. Do we still allow the Holy Spirit to chip and sand us so that we can fit into this building of God?

We have much to thank the Father for, because by His grace, this building, of which we are a living part, stands on a **firm foundation.** Part of this foundation is the Word of God that the prophets and apostles penned through the Holy Spirit. They also taught nothing other than that **Jesus Christ must be the foundation of our faith.** This is not the end product of people's imagination, but solid ground upon which God builds His church, with all His children.

Yet we hear further here that Jesus is also the **cornerstone** of God's house. A cornerstone, in the old way of building, was the most important stone of a building. This stone was laid first. It had to determine the direction of the walls and, moreover, bear the weight of these walls. So Christ determines the direction of the building work done with us. He bears the full weight of God's house, and in verse 21, we hear that the whole building is joined together in Him. He determines the unity, the character, and the beauty of this house.

A house built in and on Him is alive, and it grows stronger and larger until it is a **holy temple for the Lord.** Isn't that wonderful – a simple house has the potential to grow in Christ. It grows spiritually as the relationship with God becomes stronger, but it also grows physically, as the stones preserve and strengthen the unity and peace among themselves. And then the ultimate purpose of a temple is not the glory of the stones in the temple. It is for the glory of Him who lives there.

With this image of the building, Paul wants to make it clear: God does not live in dead buildings. He lives in people, in everyone who is part of the unity of His household. Therefore, we cannot just be a pile of building material, each trying to be a small part of a house on our own. No, we must allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit to be **built together into a house that is a holy temple for the Lord.** One in which He will dwell with pride because He is the foundation and cornerstone.

**Conclusion**

**On Christ, God builds for Himself one spiritual house, from all His children.**

Are you perhaps someone who occasionally comes to look at the house of the Lord but doesn't become part of it yourself? Then be obedient, be intentional in your relationship with God, so that Christ can make you usable building material. He is our peace; follow Him.

Amen!