

TITLE: NATURE OF THE CHURCH - ENTRANCE INTO THE BODY
TEXT: EPH 2:1-18
THESIS: The purpose of this sermon is to discuss the significance of being able to enter Christ's body

INTRO: **Entrance into the body of Christ:** Our focus this morning will not merely be on the steps to becoming a member of Christ's body. Rather we want to focus more on the *significance* of becoming a member of Christ's body. What does this mean to the non-Christian, and what should it still mean to us today as Christians?

I. OUR PAST CONDITION (v. 1-3):

- A. 1 Jn 3:4 – sin = breaking God's law. Rom 3:23 – all have sinned. Isa 59:2 – all are separated from God.
- B. Dead! – in our sins (v. 1) – we walked according to the world, according to Satan (v. 2)
- C. We had our conversation (*lived*) among children of disobedience & in the lust of our flesh. We lived in it!
 - 1. Fulfilling (doing) the desires of the flesh and mind.
 - 2. 1 Cor 10:13 & James 1 teach that *being* tempted is not the sin...giving in (doing/fulfilling it) **IS** sin.
- D. We were *by nature*... what does this mean? By *what/whose* nature? Thayers gives two main ideas:
 - 1. - "the nature of things, the force, laws, order of nature" (how *God* created nature and us)
 - 2. - "a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature" or natural.
(e.g. it has become natural (habit) for me to pop my knuckles, etc.)But what is the **CONTEXT**? Is it talking about what God did to make us this way, or what *we* did?
 - a. Immediate context of v. 1-3: it is clearly talking about *our* actions, not God's.
 - b. Bible context: If #1, then God created all humans sinful (by *His* nature). He then condemned us all for living the way *He* created us (Rom 3:23 – all have sinned and fallen short; 6:23 – wages...). This makes God inconsistent and unfair.
- E. So this was our condition, and it was by our own doing. To get out of it will also require our own doing...our own response to what God has done (faith + grace). But what has God done?

II. GOD'S REMEDY – (We did NOTHING to earn it) (v. 4-18):

- A. Reason for the remedy (v. 4-6) – God's great love, which causes Him to be rich in mercy (very merciful)
 - 1. God created you. He has no desire to see anyone lost (2 Pet 3:9; 1 Tim 2:4).
 - 2. Parents can understand this love, because they love their children *unconditionally*.
- B. God's purpose in this remedy (v. 7-10)
 - 1. To display his kindness and grace (v. 7)
 - 2. It is by this grace, not by meritorious works, we have been saved (v. 8-10)
 - a. Our works do not earn salvation! No man can boast. (v. 8-9)
 - b. But they are necessary, because we are created *in Christ Jesus (in His church) unto good works* (v. 10)
 - c. We should walk in good works (v. 10), not in the previous life of sin (v. 2). This is the change!
- C. God's peace – through the blood of Christ (v. 11-18)
 - 1. Peace between man and man (Jew and Gentile at that time; between all mankind today) (v. 11-15)
 - 2. Peace between man and God (v. 16-17)
- D. A very bleak picture has been painted in v. 1-3 (our horrible sinful condition *we* have chosen). Remember, God can't have any part of this. "God is light, and in Him is **NO** darkness at all" (1 Jn 1:5). We had no hope (v. 12)!
- E. **BUT** (v. 4), for no reason other than his great love for us, he provided the plan for our redemption. We could never earn this!

III. GOD'S PLAN – (But we must do something to RECEIVE it):

- A. 1st, we must realize our sinful and lost condition...without any hope (v. 12). As Christians, we must remember this condition as well, in order to recognize our continued dependence on God and our need to stay faithful.
- B. Plan of Salvation (hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized) – it is by grace (God's part), through faith (your part)
- C. So, what did *these Ephesians* do to receive this salvation?
 - 1. They clearly did not *earn* it (v. 8-9 – salvation is by grace...salvation is a gift...not because of works)
 - 2. But this same grace has appeared to ALL men (Titus 2:11). So what is significant about these Ephesians?
 - 3. 1st – they **heard** and **believed** (1:13). What else? Acts 19:5 –**baptism**; 19:18-19 – **confession & repentance**
- D. They did the same things that were being commanded of everyone. These same steps are commanded of us today.

CONCLUSION: These steps will get an erring sinner *into Christ* (that is, into His *body*-into His *church*). Anyone who has not taken these steps is invited to do so this morning. For those of us who *have* taken these steps, we must remain faithful to God's word. This is why we spent most of our time focusing on the amazing love of God in providing this plan of salvation...because it is free; not earned; and this should be the motivation for us to continue in good works, as He commands.