

Once Outcast, But Now Adopted Into God's Family

By Lay Pastor Besar Hartono

Ephesians 2: 11-22

Johor, Sunday, 15th April 2018

Shalom,

We have to acknowledge that the church service belongs to the Lord while a pastor, elders and church council are authorized by the Lord to run the service. Thus, we are obligated to respect the service from beginning to end instead of busying ourselves with games on our smartphones or chatting with our friends, especially during the sermon. If we do not honor the presence of God, we will ruin our own future. So, beware. It is not surprising to know that there are people who are not (less) blessed. They are always complaining and nourishing their pessimistic outlooks on their future. Their speech brings no blessings to others. On the other hand, if we pay respect to our service in church, He will not hold Himself back to richly bless us. Don't we remember that we were once dead in trespasses and sins but made alive together with Christ and seated together with Him in Heaven alongside the exceeding riches of His grace (Ephesians 2: 1-7)? Please note this: there is no single prophet or apostle who could give us places in Heaven except the Word of God that has become flesh and reigns over Heaven and earth. By grace we have been saved through faith, not by our efforts or works. It is merely the gift of God (vv. 8-9). That's why we have no reason to boast for we were created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God has prepared beforehand (v. 10).

Doing good or bad is a matter of choice we cannot do without every time. Doing good deeds is identical to sowing seeds that will someday bear fruit. How long have we been shepherded in our church? Keep in mind that we have inherited our faith from an employer, not an employee or a coolie. The faith of an employee tends to lounge and even falls asleep when nothing is to be done. In contrast, diligence and discipline are the key attributes of an employer's faith in anticipation of tremendous rewards. That's what a victorious life is all about.

What was God's plan and will for the Ephesians and us?

□ The vision/ purpose of God was to build the Ephesian congregation and us to be the holy Temple of God amidst the gentile Ephesians, the idolaters.

□ God's mission for the Ephesians was accomplished through the temple construction by the living God. That is to say, His mission was to save all the Ephesians (gentiles) through the believers, guide and educate them to be the holy Temple of God. Instead of hate speech that would hurt people, good and positive teaching would come out of God's

Temple for the Ephesians (gentiles) to hear and see. The Ephesians had a duty to spread the 'aroma' of good deeds for the non-believers to "inhale," rather than the smell of incense coming out of the temples of the Ephesians (gentiles). This way, the name of the Lord will be glorified and His grace will fall on His church. What applied to the Ephesians also applies to us.

Illustration: When it comes pre-war strategies, each disputing country allocates a fortune to finance its espionage mission in order to secretly discover the strengths and weaknesses of its enemy. Other than that, they also need to measure its own military strength to combat the enemy's onslaught.

What was God's vision to build the congregation of Ephesians and us to be the holy Temple of God?

□ He wanted to bring the Ephesians to their senses and warn them not to boast because they were once far away from God and brought near to Him by the grace of God Almighty (Ephesians 2:11-13). And this applies not only to the Ephesian believers but to us all as well.

How did the Ephesians and we behave in the past? We were all lovers of ourselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful and so forth (2 Timothy 3: 1-5). These bad habits were blotted out of their and our lifestyles in order to obey the will of the living God.

□ He wished to train the Ephesians' sensitivity as they became believers only by the grace of God in Christ. This also applies to us. Otherwise, we will act on our own will (cf. Hebrews 12: 14-17). How could an employer obey an employee, parents follow their children's orders and a lecturer listens to the students and so forth? It takes a sensitive heart to build the Temple of God.

□ God wants us to be living witnesses wherever we are to bring those who are strangers and foreigners (non-believers) to be members of God's household (Ephesians 2:19).

□ The blood of Christ glues the separate and reconciles the disputing parties (Ephesians 2:16). We were once God's enemies, but we have been reconciled to Him through the death of His Son (Romans 5:8-10). Isn't that so?

Application: Let's not be content with our own salvation. Never forget our commission to proclaim Jesus and the power of His cross so that many people may believe in Him because they live as the enemies of the cross of Christ (Philippians 3:18). Let's live in peace with one another. If we have enemies, let's humble ourselves and ask for forgiveness so that we may become the holy Temple of God. The truth is that we are often hurting not because we stumble over a 'huge stone' before us but over the 'pebbles' that we often underestimate. And these pebbles block and even stop God's blessings.

□ Jesus died as a human and His death annulled the indictment of the Law (Ephesians 2:15). God's grace leads us to repentance, but if we harden our hearts and will not repent, God's judgment will be

Once Outcast, But Now Adopted Into God's Family

Ditayangkan: Minggu, 15 April 2018 11:20

revealed. On the other hand, He will give eternal life to those who diligently do good (Romans 2:1-10). That's why we shall not forget all His benefits (Psalms 103: 2).

□ The Lord will lay a rock solid foundation of the teaching of the apostles and prophets on Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). We could be easily offended and hurt if we are not built on Christ as our cornerstone.

Matthew 7: 24-27 writes about two kinds of foundations, namely sand and stones. Which kind of foundation would we choose to stand strong against the madness of wind, rain and floods? Stay on guard in order not let the overwhelming blessings or a tiff with a friend shock us, making us stop attending church and serving Him!

If we are close to Him, we do not need to worry about our future. The Word of God that we 'consume' everyday gives us strength to stay strong and do our activities. His blood reconciles us to God. We enjoy living in harmony with other people and bring those who do not believe in Him (yet) to salvation in Him. We need humility to do all these without the slightest arrogance. Having a solid foundation, we become the holy Temple of God that releases the 'aroma' of good deeds benefiting everyone all around us. In this way, there will be no more walls of separation. We are all united in the family of God to be His possessions forever. Amen.