

- ***READ Hebrews 9:11-15*** One cannot read the letter that was written to the Hebrews and come away with conclusions that do not include the fact that everything having to do with Christ is far away superior to that which had come before. Even just with these five short verses we read that in Christ there is a better high priest, a better tabernacle, a true redemption, better sacrificial blood, and a better covenant with better promises. All of these were present under Moses, but they were but a small taste of the reality that was to come in Christ.
- One might think that the Jews reading this letter would be overjoyed with the better parts of their covenant with Christ, but we must admit that it would have been very difficult for the Jews to disconnect themselves from what as a crown jewel in their culture...the temple. In their minds, the Jewish temple was the fulfillment of God's promise of His desire to dwell among His chosen people.

God's Dwellings Among Men (*Temple and the Presence of God* by Brandon Schmidt)

A. God dwelt among men.

1. In the earliest recordings of the Old Testament, we find God going into the presence men and meeting with them on a personal and individual level at different sacred sites. We first find Him walking in the presence of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. (**Genesis 3:8**)
2. After the gates of Eden were closed, we can then find God coming into the presence of Abraham and Sarah at the Oakes of Mamre (**Genesis 18**), the presence of Abraham at Mount Moriah (**Genesis 22**), and the presence of Jacob at Bethel. (**Genesis 28**) We can also look to Mount Sinai as a place where God would allow His presence to descend on multiple occasions. (**Exodus 3 & 19**)

B. God dwelt in the tabernacle.

1. However, it wasn't until the giving of the Law of Moses that God commanded for a physical structure to be created in which His presence would be able to dwell. It was during one of his trips to Sinai that Moses was given instructions on the tabernacle that God wanted him to build.
2. This portable structure would serve as the sanctuary and worship center for God's people of Israel. More significantly, this structure would serve as the place where God's presence would be able to dwell among His people no matter where they were camped. (**"Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them."** **Exodus 25:8**)

C. God dwelt in Solomon's temple.

1. Once David was able to lead the children of Israel to the conquest of Jerusalem, it was his son that would eventually build a permanent temple for God. To say that this permanent structure was glorious and ornate would be massive understatement, and a reading of **I Kings 5-8** would make that abundantly evident. It truly was the crown jewel of the Jewish people.
 2. The same activities that took place in the tabernacle would continue in the temple. However, Solomon was quick to recognize that temple could never house the fully divine presence of Yahweh. **"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built?"** (**I Kings 8:27**) While this statement of Solomon was true, the reality is that God so desired to dwell among His chosen people, and He did so up until the time when the temple was destroyed and the people were carried off into captivity.
- Upon their return to Jerusalem, the people once again constructed a temple for their God, and yet we never find a statement that establishes that the presence of God ever dwelt in that temple as it had in Solomon's temple. Does this mean that God would never again dwell among His people? Some might be led to this conclusion, but what we see three times throughout Paul's letters to the Corinthians (**I Corinthians 3:16,17; I Corinthians 6:15-20; II Corinthians 6:14-18**) is that God's presence would once again dwell among the people of His Son, for they would be temples of the living God.

I. Law Of Moses Connections

A. Christians are the substance of the Old Testament shadow of the temple as a dwelling place for God.

1. The big point that Paul is trying to get across in these text is that there was no longer a place where God's people needed to go if they wanted to be in the presence of God. There was no need for them to go to the land of the Oaks of Mamre, Mount Moriah, Mount Sinai, the tabernacle or the Jerusalem temple for God no longer finds His dwelling place in a specific and central location.
2. Instead, what we read in the words of Paul is that is that we, as Christians, are now the temples in which the presence of God is to dwell and resonate from. It is, now, within ourselves that we find the place in which we meet with God and can feel His presence.
 - a) *"Do you not know that **you are a temple of God** and that the Holy Spirit dwells in you?" (I Corinthians 3:16)*
 - b) *"Or do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit** who is in you?" (I Corinthians 6:19)*
 - c) *"Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For **we are the temple of the living God...**" (I Corinthians 6:16)*
3. It cannot be ignored that this text very clearly teaches us that we become something incredible and extraordinary when we are washed by the blood of Jesus Christ. This is true of us collectively as a church body, but it is also something that is true of us individually. The reality is that when people come into this place and are among us as a church family, they should feel God's presence just as people would when they entered the tabernacle or the temple. When other's are around us as individuals, they should sense that something is different about us. They should be able to tell that there is something special about us, and friends that something different and special is the fact that we are temples and dwelling places for the presence of God and the Holy Spirit.
4. The physical structure of the tabernacle and temple served as this place and shadow under Moses, but in Christ it is His people who serve in the true substance of this role. Those Jews among the Corinthians should have understood the gravity of these words of Paul. Just as the temple was the place in which the works of God were accomplished, it was now in them as Christians that the works of God were to be carried out.

B. Paul highlights God's consistent desire for His people to be separate from the sinful world.

1. Paul also quotes from multiple places within the Old Testament to show the Corinthians the place they now stood before God as His holy dwelling places.
 - a) *"I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me. I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God." (Exodus 29:44,45)*
 - b) *"Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people." (Leviticus 26:11,12)*
 - c) *"Depart, depart, go out from there, Touch nothing unclean; Go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, You who carry the vessels of the Lord." (Isaiah 52:1-11[11])*
 - d) *"I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men," (II Samuel 7:14)*
2. Notice what Paul is highlighting in these text. He begins in the first two quotations by speaking of God's desire to dwell among His people. He is not a God and Creator who wants to be far removed from those whom He has chose, but He wants to be in among them and in close fellowship with them. He goes on two say that in order for Him to be among His people, they must come out from among the sinful and be pure and holy. He finishes this quotation by speaking to His desires to keep them in line though discipline. God desires to be among us and lead us as we ought to go!

II. 4 Things We Must Remember

A. We have been joined to Christ.

1. The context of Paul's words in **I Corinthians 6:14** centers around the issue of sexual immorality, some of which had even been present within the Corinthian church. Paul seems frustrated with these brethren and straight up asks them if they even know that their bodies are members of Christ? Are they even aware of the fact that they had been joined to Christ? He ramps up the sarcasm by then asking if he should take that which is joined to Christ and join it to a prostitute! Of course the answer was "no!", but these brethren seemed to have forgotten what had taken place when they became obedient to the Gospel.
2. Paul makes it very clear in numerous portions of his writings that amazing things take place when we hear the Gospel message and act upon it in faith. Paul says in **Galatians 3:27**, *"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."* He would also say in **Romans 6:5,6** *"For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin."* It is only at the point in which we are joined to Christ that we are established as vessels that are suitable for God and His Holy Spirit to dwell within and lead. Yet, we must not forget that this opportunity didn't come at no cost.

B. Our joining to Christ came at an immense and awful price.

1. There was precious blood that was shed in order that we might be cleansed of our sins, and it was through this shedding of blood that we have the opportunity to live as temples for God to dwell within. While cleansing under Moses was given through the sacrificing of bulls and goats, we read earlier that there was a more significant cleansing that came through the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ. *"For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"* (**Hebrews 9:13,14**)
2. There is no way at all that we can take our responsibility as temples of the living God less than seriously when we consider what had to take place in order for this to be made possible. Think about the tabernacle and the temple. What about those structures measured up to anything less than the best of the very best? Go back and read what went into the construction of those buildings and we will quickly be reminded that nothing short of the very best was given in order for them to be constructed and decorated. In a much more significant way, we must recognize that the best of the very very best was given so that we might be able to serve in this capacity.

C. That great cost demands that we be committed to holiness.

1. This cost ought to motivate us to make sure that we preserve ourselves in the very best condition, and there is no greater condition that we can exist in than that of being holy and righteous. Again, this was the main reason that Paul is writing these words. There was immorality in the Corinthians camp! A man had his mother-in-law in a sexually immoral matter, and that awful situation needed to be rectified. (**I Corinthians 5:1,2**) Why did it need to be rectified? The answer was because these brethren were supposed to be the temples in which God could dwell, and yet He could not dwell within them when they were all caught up in condoning this immorality.
2. Further, these admonishments were good for the Corinthians to hear because they were located in a city that was a hotbed for immorality. The church that was in Corinth was surrounded by pagan worship, and not just any old pagan worship. The reality is that this was pagan worship of the sexually explicit type. It is well documented in history that there was a grand temple dedicated to the goddess Aphrodite that was located in Corinth.

3. Some would say Aphrodite was the goddess of sexual relations, but it might be more accurate to say that she was the goddess of prostitution. There were hundreds of male and female prostitutes that would work out of the temple on a daily basis. They would even go and stand along the roadside leading into the city in order to entice passersby to use their service once they entered into the city. This was a very engrained practice within the culture of Corinth, and these brethren could always stand to be reminded of their duty to pursue holiness and purity as those who had been joined to Christ through His great sacrifice. They were surrounded on all sides by this immorality, and maybe it shouldn't surprise us at all that some within their own number had been caught up in some of it. Yet, that sin was not something that Paul was willing to tolerate because he knew that God Himself would not tolerate such behavior because it would make those who were guilty unfit to serve as temples for His presence.

D. God can only dwell with that which is holy and righteous.

1. All throughout these verses Paul emphasizes the importance of Christians being holy in their conduct. Specifically, the issue at hand is that of sexual morality. *"Or do you not know the the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "The two shall become one flesh?" (I Corinthians 6:16)* Paul's point? He wants these brethren to recognize the serious nature of the sexual relationship! It was something that came with major implications, and it was not to be taken lightly. Surely this explains why it is only in the marriage relationship that such is permitted. **(Hebrews 13:4)**
2. With this in mind, consider the strong language that Paul includes in these texts. Yes, these context might be specifically focusing on sexual immorality, but I will strongly suggest that anything that is sinful and immoral could be applied to what is said in **II Corinthians 6:14-16**. The bottom line being that our willingness to carry the same weight of sin as the world around us will only result in our being unfit to serve as temples for the living God.
 - a) *"Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body."* **(I Corinthians 6:18)**
 - b) *"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness with lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?"* **(II Corinthians 6:14-16)**
3. How does God feel about the one who is willing to destroy the temple of God through an unwillingness to strive for holiness and righteousness? Consider **I Corinthians 3:17**, *"If any man destroys the temple of God, **God will destroy him**, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are."* Friends, we are God's holy temples, and our failure to strive for holiness, righteousness, and purity will only result in our disqualification as temples in which He might reside with His Holy Spirit. If we fail to have God living in us and through us then we have failed to be what His Son died for us to be. What a miserable and wretched state when something so much great and glorious awaits for us.

These Corinthians were surely in a difficult spot by having so much pressure bearing down upon them from the wicked and immoral culture that was on every side. However, that did cause Paul to expect anything less than holiness and righteousness so that they might be able to serve as the temples that God desired for them to be. We, too, live in an exceedingly wicked world in which we are hounded on every side by that which is evil and against the will of God. However, we, too, have no excuse when it comes to striving for God's great calling. May we embrace our roles as the temples of the living God, and may He strengthen us each day to be those temples in which He dwells and through whom the Lord can work to change the hearts of men by the Gospel of His beloved Son.