

## Ephesians 2:19-22

<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, <sup>20</sup> having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Verse 19 begins in the Greek with words literally translated, "Therefore, therefore..." It is a huge transition that is telling us the result of the work that Christ has done on the cross that enables God to create from the two a new humanity, a new body of Christ, who is the church. These verses serve as a summary to all that has been given. The summary comes by way of three illustrations used to identify the kind of bonding that is the church.

**First**, we are not strangers, but fellow citizens of the kingdom.

It is still an honor to be a citizen of these United States of America in spite of all the adversity we have faced recently as a nation. Right now we are seeing the best of the nation as we pull together to help our own in Texas and Louisiana.

However, the greatest honor is to be a citizen of heaven. When we die, though U.S citizenship is done. BUT, citizenship in heaven takes on a whole new, better dimension.

We could spend time on that, but that is not where I want to camp today.

**Second**, we are of the household of God. We are of his household not in the sense of servants, but as family. My heavenly Dad is the Creator of the Universe. How cool is that? My heavenly Dad is a greater dad than any earthly dad no matter how good our earthly dad may be or may have been.

We could spend time on that. But that's not where I want to camp today.

**Third**, we are a holy temple of our God. Here is where I want to spend our time.

It seems that is where most of the attention is given in this passage. Let's walk through the verses again that use this imagery of the body of Christ.

Beginning with verse 20, "Having been built (that's important) on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, (that's important) Christ being the corner stone (that's very important), in whom the whole building, being fitted together (important), is growing (important) into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

My outline is going to be very unconventional. I am going to take these verses phrase by phrase. That's my outline.

### Having been built

If we are "having been built," then we are not the ones who are building it.

If we are "having been built," then we are not the owners of what is being built.

I will say this again later. This building is not the church. It is the meeting house in which Maple Baptist Church meets. That's what is meant here. No man builds the church.

We are not the builders of this church. No man is the builder of any church. Any person who thinks they are going to build God's church will have a mess on their hands.

Jesus makes the statement that is very clear in Matthew 16. "Upon this rock, I will build my church." Who is going to build the church? Jesus said, "I will build my church. Whose church is it? Jesus said, I will build MY church."

That statement of Paul and Jesus gives us clear communication of who owns the church.

The statement of Paul and Jesus also gives clear communication of the enduring power of the church. Ephesians says, "having been built." English language does not capture everything that is written there in NT language. The language is stating that the building has started and the building will endure for eternity.

Right now, the Church of Jesus Christ is going through tremendous persecution. The persecution comes in the form of actual physical harm done to church members and the meeting places where they meet. The persecution also comes in the form of legislation and judicial decisions that try to stop Christian influence from going beyond the walls of the church buildings. Some of you have been victims of what is happening. There are faculties of schools in South Carolina right now who are being threatened with lawsuits right now by organizations because they are expressing their faith in the school setting.

Satan will do what he can, but the Church will not go away until Christ comes to take us to be with Him.

What gives the Church that enduring power?

Let's go to the second and third important phrase in these verses. We will work it backwards.

### **Christ Himself is the cornerstone. The foundation is the apostles and the prophets**

I am not a builder. But I don't think cornerstones are as big of a deal these days as they were in the days of Paul. The cornerstone was the most important stone of the building. Archeologists have discovered foundations of buildings that had huge cornerstones.

The cornerstone was the stone on which the rest of the building was built. The foundation extended from the cornerstone. The levels were determined by the cornerstone. The walls were built in line with the cornerstone.

Jesus is our cornerstone. The foundation of the apostles and the prophets was placed in line of the cornerstone. What is the foundation? It is the writings of the apostles and the prophets. We have those writings. They are called the Word of God. Here is our foundation. This book has been attacked, attempted to be eliminated. Yet, as Christ said, all in this book shall be fulfilled.

Kim Jong Un. He's a madman isn't he? He seems to have no fear whatsoever. There is one thing Kim Jung Un fears more than anything. It's not any government. It's this book, the Bible. It has been documented that this book is the one he hates the most, because it is the one thing he fears more than anything else.

### **Let's look at the next phrase—Being fitted together.**

The word is used of a stonemason who takes stones given to him and fitting them together to be a level, smooth, strong building or wall. The stone masons of yesteryears did not get uniform bricks such as we have today. The stones were multi sized, multi-shaped, and of different materials. The stone mason built the wall fitting each stone purposefully, and deliberately to create his work. Put within the context of the church, a few things stand out to me.

You are chosen. You are unique in your gifts and in who you are. God chooses us personally to be a part of His church.

You are placed purposefully. You were hand placed by God Himself to be part of His church.

You are part of something perfect. When God finishes building His church it is perfect. We are part of something that is perfect. After all, God is the builder.

You are part of something that is growing. The church does not stop growing. It never was intended to stop growing. We grow in number. However, that is not the only measure. We grow in strength. We grow in quality growth. We grow to be more and more like Christ.

### **The last phrase—a holy temple, a dwelling place of God.**

The OT temple was seen as the place where God dwelt. When the temple was destroyed in the OT, the people became terrified. For them, it meant the departure of God's presence from them.

We get too caught up in thinking these buildings are the dwelling place of God. In my last church, we had a daycare center. Twice a year, the classes of the daycare would have programs where the kids sang. They performed in the worship center. The director told them over and over. This is God's house. Let's respect it and be quiet as we go in. In that worship center, there was a door next to the organ that went back to where the baptistery was. This little preschooler kept looking at that door with a lot of fear in her face. The teacher asked what was wrong. She said, "Is that where God lives?"

These buildings are not the dwelling place of God. These buildings should actually be called the Meeting House of Maple Baptist Church. You are the church. You are the dwelling place of God. You have residing in you the Holy Spirit of God. These buildings are where MBC meet to worship, to learn, to fellowship, and to minister. We are in the process of building this new building over here. You may not be aware of this, but at the four corners of that but underneath on which the corners of the foundation sit, there are God's Word, symbolizing the true cornerstone and the true foundation of the church.

If that is our heart, then we need to acknowledge this building as not ours, but His. If it is God's building, then if we have not started, we need to start seeking and following God's leading to what He wants this building to be about. When we do that, we will see incredible things happened that can only be explained as being of God.

When people step into this building, they will sense the presence of God. That won't be because God is in the buildings. It will be because the Holy Spirit is filling us the church.

The buildings are to be used as tools, instruments of what God is doing in our hearts and ministry.

Knowing the heart of your building committee, I think I am speaking on their behalf. Let's do what God wants us to do in humbling ourselves before God, unite together. Let's then let God finish this

building and use this building to meet the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of this community.

You are fellow citizens together with the saints.

You are of God's household.

You are the temple of God, and the dwelling place of God in the Spirit.