

“Christ Is Our Cornerstone”—Ephesians 2:19-22

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Christ Is Our Cornerstone”, is Ephesians 2:19-22 → *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in Whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

What does it take to feel like you “fit in?” This is a very pertinent question especially in the mind of a person who is just beginning an activity or organization. The little child who starts school wondering if he will fit in with the other kids in his class. This apprehension does not go away as time passes either. Making the shifts into different schools, walking on to a new job site, joining a group in the community and yes, even attending worship in a church for the first time. What does it take to feel like you “fit in?”

Much depends upon the individual. Many assume it is easier for an individual to “fit in” if she is gregarious and outgoing rather than shy and

introverted. Some might think it is easier to “fit in” if the people of the organization are welcoming and embracing. When it comes to congregations many feel they “fit in” based upon ascetics—how the building looks, the style of worship or the many programs which serve their areas of interests. Many people feel like they “fit in” because the others around them “look like them.” But what happens when the gregarious person is viewed by others as controlling and overbearing? What happens when the shy person is threatened by the “welcoming committee?” What happens when the programs change and I simply don’t feel like I “fit in” any longer? There must be a more stable basis for fitting into a congregation.

The early Church also had its struggles with people feeling like they didn’t “fit in” all because of sin. The church in Corinth apparently had some issues of people saying they didn’t need other people’s spiritual gifts as well as some who didn’t feel they “fit in” because they weren’t gifted like others. (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:15-21). James chided Christians about the sin of partiality because they favored the rich over the poor in their worship services. (cf. James 2:1-7) An ongoing issue for the early Christian church was Gentiles feeling like they didn’t “fit in” because they weren’t Jewish and some Jews making them feel like they weren’t included for the same reason.

In our text Paul was reassuring the Gentile Christians in Ephesus that they

truly did belong because the Person & Work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. He says: *So then . . .* that is, based upon God saving them by His grace in the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit's gifting them all with faith in Christ (cf. Ephesians 2:1-10), Who dealt with the sin of all people on the cross (cf. Ephesians 2:11-18) . . . *so then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.* They "fit in" to this body of believers totally on the basis of Who Jesus was and what Jesus did, not on the basis of their own perceptions, interests or desires.

We are *fellow citizens* as Philippians 3:20 says: *Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.* This Church on earth is simply a glimpse of our real home we will receive when Jesus *will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body!* (cf. Philippians 3:21; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10) We are also *members of the household of God* based upon our baptisms. Galatians 3:26-27 says that *in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* Welcome to the family!

Notice the solid reason for understanding why you "fit in" to Christ's Church according to verse 20 of our text: *We are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone. The foundation of the apostles and prophets* refers to the proclaimed and written

Word of God upon which our faith rests. That which directed the proclaimed and written Word of God was the promised Messiah in the Old Testament and the Jesus, the Christ Who fulfilled those promises in the New Testament. Thus, He is *the cornerstone* giving direction to the building of His Church as well as bearing the weight of its sin and guilt. This is the basis of the apostles' teaching and the Church's worship as seen in the example of those who believed in Jesus on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:42 says *they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

Continuing with the example of a building Paul describes how this building grows. Verses 21-22 of our text says that **in Jesus** *the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.* The structure of Christ's Church consists of people—broken, fallen sinners who trust in Christ for forgiveness and eternal life! We are *joined together* by God's Spirit, not by some choice of our own doing.

Just as the temple in the Old Testament was the place where Yahweh **chose** to have His presence dwell so the Church of Jesus Christ *grows into a holy temple in the Lord . . . built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit* by His choice. This growth happens as we gather to distribute and

receive His means of grace—the Gospel, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper and Absolution—where we are connected anew to our cornerstone, Jesus Christ! The church is not just another faith-based institution of society which exists to be a “full service organization” for everyone’s personal desires. It is a forgiveness dispensing *temple in the Lord* Jesus for lost, broken sinners! You belong because of Christ alone! Only Christ and no one or nothing else is the cornerstone of the Church!

This is why it is so important for Christians to gather together, to be present with each other as *a holy temple in the Lord* instead of disconnecting their presence from the congregation. The unfortunate part of Christian identity is that so many Christians fail to see that they do “fit in” thinking that they don’t “fit in.” This is due to satanic deception. He deceives people into thinking they “fit in” the world better than the church. If they believe the lie long enough they will eventually divorce themselves from the very forgiveness of sin they need.

My brothers and sisters, don’t believe the lie. You “fit in” the structure, permanently placed here by Jesus, your Cornerstone, in His gracious forgiveness! You belong to God’s people by faith in Jesus, your Cornerstone! While many spell the word “church” this way . . .

CHCH

. . . God spells it this way . . .

CHURCH

. . . because the church is not the church unless U R in it! Jesus has placed you right where you belong. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Romans 1:7)

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