

Ephesians 2:19–22

Greatness of Unity with One Another and God

This passage gives us three pictures of the nearness into which Christ has brought us toward each other and toward God.

First, we are fellow citizens with the saints. We identify with one another like two people who are living in a foreign land and discover that they are from the same hometown. We are living in one place, but we come from another, and our identity is there—in “Saintville.” Whenever we meet a fellow city-zen from Saintville, we should find that they are “our people.” We should speak the same dialect, fondly remember the same landmarks, and serve the interests of and defend the honor of our city.

Second, we are members of the house of God. Before getting into v20–21, this is a way of saying that we are “family.” We are stuck with one another, so we need to overlook offenses and be more tolerant of quirks. These are the people with whom we can be ourselves. But it also means that we are to bear the family resemblance and live by the house rules. God Himself is Head of the household, so it’s not really “up to us” to decide what a “family” (this family) should be.

Third, we are parts of a building. This can get uncomfortable for us, because in order for the stones to be fit into a building, and especially a great building like a temple, they must be very precisely tooled into line with the foundation. Christ, the corner stone, establishes shape and size and direction for the rest of the foundation. And the apostles and prophets (the latter, the preachers of the NT church, including but not limited to the former) are extensions from Christ who determine everything about what will be built upon them.

Being built is not particularly enjoyable for “living stones.” Parts that don’t fit must be knocked off, rough edges made smooth, two stones that don’t complement each other well both shaved off until they come into alignment. But the process by which we are “fitted together” (v21) and “built together” is called “growing” in v21. These painful alterations to our character and interaction come not so much by decisive blows but by an organic process. Some of the sharpest “growing pains” in the Christian life come not only because of our own sin, which must be done away with in order to build properly upon the foundation, but also because of the way that we interact with other sinners, with whom we must be fitted together.

Finally, this increasing closeness to one another (same town, same family, fitted together) comes with an astonishing closeness to God. Of the two common NT words for temple, this one refers to the inner, holy place. God’s glory had come down and filled first the tabernacle, and then the temple, but now He Himself has taken up residence in His church—the holiest of all holies on earth. That’s a massive privilege!

And it comes with a responsibility: the church is not ours to “have a vision for.” Not only is it to be built according to God’s exact specifications, but it is His Spirit who takes up residence there and directs all by His Word.

Into what amazing closeness our peace-making Savior has brought us with one another and with God!