

Sunday, October 27, 2024

Christ Our Peace

This is the fifth in a series of sermons through Ephesians, and today, we will finish chapter two. Please recall that chapter one ends with Paul recounting his prayer for the Ephesians, the final petition being that we would know “what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward...” (1:19). He then proceeds to flesh out what that power looks like. Last time, we covered 2:1-10, which takes us from the depths of despair and hopelessness where all human beings are dead in trespasses and sins, slaves of the world, Satan and our own lusts, and children of wrath, to the heights of glory, where He has exercised His great mercy, love and grace towards us by quickening us with Christ, raising us up with Christ, and seating us in heavenly places with Christ. The whole thing (including our faith and good works) is a gracious gift of God. We are indeed “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” (2:10).

Ephesians 2:11-22 is today’s passage. It is very similar to what we saw last time, but it hits things from a different angle. This passage focuses on Gentiles and Jews, alienation, the cross of Christ, reconciliation, and peace. Where the previous passage seems to focus on the individual, this passage has a greater focus on the corporate body of saints, describing it using the images of citizenship, household, and temple. But the overall message is similar – it describes our desperate plight and that Christ has intervened to rescue us.

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:11-22)

We can divide the passage up into three sections. Verses 11-12 describe the historically sorry state of the Gentiles in their separation from the people of God and from God Himself (which can certainly be applied to each of us, before we were saved). Verses 13-18 describe what Christ has done for us in terms of peace, reconciliation, unity, and new creation. And verses 19-22 describe what we are now, using the metaphors of citizenship, family, and temple.

Without Christ

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: (Ephesians 2:11-12)

We come to the first command in the epistle – “Remember!” Apart from an implied command in 3:13, we won’t come to another command in this epistle until chapter 4. Please recall that chapters 1-3 are primarily doctrinal, and chapters 4-6 are primarily practical. So far, the focus has been on God’s work – what He has done, and what our position is before Him because of what He’s done (not because of what we’ve done!). It’s important to lay that down first. If you jump immediately into practical commands and skip the grace of God, you turn the gospel into works righteousness; you’ve left Christianity and turned to a Satanic moralism.

And what is it that we’re supposed to remember? We’re supposed to remember our condition “in time past.” The world wants you to remember other things, but Paul wants you to remember this. Now, this passage focuses primarily on Gentiles. Probably because the Ephesian church was made up of a substantial number of Gentiles, and there was an internal rift or strife going on between the Gentiles and the Jews in that church. It’s hard for us to have a concept of how big of a deal this Jewish/Gentile dynamic was in the early church, but it is all over the place in the NT. It was a huge deal. If you understand it, it makes a lot of things make more sense. It was a shocking thing to those early Jews that Gentiles were being brought in and saved by God, and to extricate many of those Jews from the mindset of the Mosaic law and their self-absorption over being the “chosen ones” was no small task.

Moving on, it’s as if he’s saying in this passage, “everyone in the church started off dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath, etc., but you Gentiles...you were in an especially dark place, and you should be especially thankful for what God has done for you. So, remember how you started; remember your former state.” This isn’t just a thing for 1st century Gentiles to do – this applies just as much to us. We sometimes tend to zero in on the sins of other people and downplay our own. But beloved, it’s good to remember. There’s nothing quite

like it to work humility and thanksgiving in your heart. When you feel pride and self-sufficiency welling up inside of you, remember. If you don't, God will arrange things in your life so you do. Remember your follies, vanities, lust, errors, covetousness, indifference, ingratitude, wasted time. Remember the injuries and corruption and sins that you have caused and led others into by your evil example. Remember that you were separated from God, and He sought you out and saved you. But don't remember so you can wallow around in self-pity and despair; remember so you can glorify God for His grace.

So, we're talking about remembering how we were "in time past" and the text specifically concerns the plight of the Gentiles. They were Gentiles "in the flesh" – they minded the things of the flesh, they fulfilled the lusts of the flesh, etc. They were contemptuously called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision" (that is, the Jews). The implication is that the Jews were the source of the hostility. These aren't righteous Jews he's talking about here – these are the so-called "Circumcision in the flesh made by hands." Their circumcision was not "of the heart" (Romans 2:29). They were focused only on the externals. They had turned this sign of the old covenant into an idol. They had put their hope in being descendants of Abraham, etc. They had taken this blessing of God and turned it into an arrogant entitlement and contempt for everyone else, and that pride continues to this very day. So, Paul focuses on Gentiles, but he's not letting the Jews off the hook. There were problems on both sides, and we'll see how that is resolved shortly. But for now, "in time past" the Gentiles were:

1. ***Without Christ.*** Can you imagine anything worse? Poole calls this "*the foundation of all other miseries.*" They had no true knowledge of Him. They were not savingly acquainted with Him. In fact, most had never even heard that there was a Messiah at all, let alone knew anything about Him. A sad state indeed. With the lies and apathy in our generation, this is a generation without Christ – they don't have Him, they don't want Him, what they know about Him is distorted by lies, and if they learn some truth about Him that doesn't conform to how they think He ought to be, they reject Him.
2. ***Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.*** They were not part of the covenant people of God. God had a peculiar interest in the people of Israel; He had set them apart for His own purposes, and the Gentiles were outside of that. Today, this would be analogous to not being associated with the church.
3. ***Strangers from the covenants of promise.*** God had made several covenants in the OT – with Abraham, Moses, David, etc. These ultimately carried the promise of Christ and were fulfilled in Christ. The Gentiles were strangers to these – the covenants were not made with them, they weren't interested in them, they didn't know about them, etc. It's because they were strangers to the covenants that they were without Christ.
4. ***Having no hope.*** What an awful state of existence. Being without Christ, they had no legitimate ground to expect anything other than sorrow. Without Christ, you have absolutely no hope, and you have no right to hope for good things. People often have

vague expectations that good things will happen to them, but this isn't hope – this is a delusion that will come crashing down like a house of cards.

5. ***Without God in the world.*** If you don't have Christ, you don't have God (1 John 2:23; 2 John 9). The Greek word here is where we get our word "atheist." You can talk all you want about believing in "God," but so long as you're without Christ, you are alienated from the one true God. These people were godless "in the world" – this doomed, damned, transient world. They were worldly, natural men.

Remember: the Jews had great privileges and advantages (Romans 3:1-2, 9:4-5). Don't minimize those amazing blessings that God had given to them or downplay the distinction God made between Jews and Gentiles. But even with these blessings, the Jews were still utter failures – the story of the OT is one failure right after the other, leaving us without any doubt that the human race's only hope is for God to intervene and save us. Part of Paul's point here is that the Gentiles did not have the privileges and advantages that the Jews had, so in that sense, they were even worse off. He wants them to remember that and to see the grace and power on God's part in recovering them – those who were without Christ now have Christ; those who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel are now part of the church; those who were strangers from the covenants of promise have now become partakers of the promise; those who were hopeless now have hope; those who were godless now have God. One final point is that even though this passage is about Gentiles and Jews, the principles can be applied to our situation. Everyone here is smart enough to make the application.

But Now In Christ Jesus...

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

(Ephesians 2:13-18)

Similar to verses 1-10, after he paints a most bleak and hopeless picture of the state of humanity and especially Gentiles, he introduces a sharp contrast between what we once were and what we are now. "But now!" Christ has come onto the scene to rescue us. In fact, what we once were is what we would still be at this very moment if He hadn't rescued us. "But now in Christ Jesus" – now it's time to stop looking at yourself and look at Christ Jesus. All these blessings are "in Christ Jesus." You were once far off, and now you've been made nigh by His

blood. I wish I could impress upon you all that salvation is primarily an issue of your relationship with God. You used to be far off, banned from His presence. Now you are near. Once you're in Christ, you're as near to God as Christ is. And it has nothing to do with anything that you've done – you were MADE nigh. God did that. Think of yourself like this: "I used to be far off, but now I've been made nigh by the blood of Christ." This is the blood of atonement and remission of sins. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). This is the blood "that speaketh better things than that of Abel." (Heb. 12:24). This blood speaks to us – of forgiveness, reconciliation, pardon, peace, redemption. This is "the blood of the everlasting covenant" of which Jesus is the mediator (Heb. 12:24, 13:20). Some are ashamed to speak of the blood of Christ, but it's the only way to get nigh to God.

Now, when Christ died, He did an amazing thing. He made peace. He Himself is our peace. Please understand that the only reason that you're saved is because God is the God of peace. He made peace between men and men, and He made peace between men and God. He's removed all those obstacles that would have hindered Him from "gather[ing] together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." (Ephesians 1:10). So, let's examine this. Remember, the context here is about Jews and Gentiles. There hasn't been a more bitter, hateful, deep-seated, long-running enmity in human history than that between Jews and Gentiles. And Christ did something about that, for all who are in Him. One way that He is our peace is that He broke down "the middle wall of partition" between us Gentiles and Jews. He removed that enmity. The allusion here is to the temple complex. The very outer court of the complex was the court of the Gentiles, and it was separated from everything else by a barricade. For a Gentile to cross the barricade was punishable by death. Archaeological digs have uncovered the following inscription on the wall: "*No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.*" In fact, Paul had recently been charged with bringing a Gentile (an Ephesian, no less!) across the barricade, which set off a series of events that resulted in his imprisonment where he wrote this epistle:

And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) (Acts 21:27-29)

Just look at that scene. The Jews despised the Gentiles – they looked at them like they were sub-human. The very idea that Gentiles could be part of the new covenant was a foreign concept to the Jews, and Lord willing, I hope to flesh that out a little bit when we get to

chapter 3 and “the mystery of Christ.” But for now, I say that when Paul says “middle wall of partition between us” he’s alluding to that physical wall at the temple...but it’s just an allusion to help paint the picture. He’s not talking about that physical wall. He’s talking about this: “Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” This is the “wall” he’s talking about. This is what was at the root of all this enmity between Jews and Gentiles. Let’s be clear – “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” (Rom. 7:12). The problem was not with the law *per se*; it was with the misuse and abuse of the law. We’re talking about those parts of the law that made a distinction or separation between Jew and Gentile, *viz.* the ceremonial parts of the law. These are the parts of the law that God commanded to set the Jews apart – circumcision, clean/unclean animals, the sacrificial system, etc. But they had missed the whole point of those laws. They were supposed to ultimately result in all families of the earth being blessed (Genesis 12:3). Israel was supposed to exist so “That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.” (Psalm 67:2). Those laws were supposed to separate the Jews to prepare the way for the Messiah. But they had turned them into a point of arrogant contention, superiority, strife, and enmity. Well, Christ broke that wall down when His body was broken on the cross, and it is never to be erected again. He was the fulfillment of all those laws and thereby abolished them, and the enmity that had sinfully come along with them.

Now, having broken down this wall, what was the result? He made peace! “He made both one.” He made “in himself of twain one new man.” He “reconcile[d] both unto God in one body.” The theme is that He made two into one. The “one new man” language means a new humanity – a new race of humans. This is a new creation. The church is a new creation, consisting of one new humanity. This is the first way that Christ is our peace. He made “IN HIMSELF of twain one new man, so making peace.” This brings us back to the “union with Christ” doctrine. He did all this IN HIMSELF. Elect Jews are united to Christ. Elect Gentiles are united to Christ. In Christ, therefore, we are one new man. Those divisions are gone now, and there is a unity in the body of Christ. I hope you see that this principle can be applied to anything that commonly causes divisions among humans (race, color, income, nationality, level of intelligence, etc.): “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28). The practical consequence of Christ making us one is that if there’s any lack of peace between the members of the body, it’s not because of any deficiency in what Christ has done – it’s because of our own sin. It’s a very wicked thing to try to rebuild the middle wall of partition. On the flip side of that is the comforting thought that since it was Christ who has made us one in Himself, we are one. That is our position in the sight of God. And our folly can’t destroy that.

But there’s another way that He is our peace. He didn’t just make peace between elect Jews and Gentiles so we’d get along better with one another. He made peace between us and God.

There was an enmity between us and God; an enmity that was introduced and perpetuated by sin. That's the problem – sin. “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2). Trapp: “*Sin, that great makebate, that sets God at odds with his own creature.*” There's an enmity there. I don't think we have a proper view of how bad sin is. We downplay it, redefine it, justify it. Every once in awhile we might have a flash of just how awful it is, but even then, however bad we think it is, it's worse. Well, this is the thing that the Lord Jesus Christ took care of on the cross. He slew the enmity that was between us and God by being slain on the cross. He has joined His people together as one body (whether Jew or Gentile), one new man, and reconciled us unto God. We who were once enemies have now been reconciled. This is a thorough reconciliation. Two parties who were once hostile towards one another have now been restored to a harmonious, loving and peaceful relationship. There's nothing quite so miserable as having someone mad at you, and nothing quite so sweet as being reconciled. It's not just the removal of hostility; it's a restoration of fellowship. This theme keeps coming up in the epistle: it is God who did it. He initiated it. Christ is the one who reconciled us to God.

The Lord Jesus finished this work on the cross. But how does it come to us? It comes to us through preaching. This peace is preached to us. That's God's way of doing things. “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (1 Cor. 1:21). The passage says that Jesus “came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” The word “preach” here means to “bring good news” or “announce glad tidings.” It's the same root word that we get “gospel” from. He came proclaiming or heralding the good news of peace with God. And how did He come and preach peace? He did it initially through His apostles. He does it today through His church. And He preaches it indiscriminately – “to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” In the context, that means to Gentiles (afar off) and to Jews (nigh). The principle is, everyone from the proud sinner who couldn't care less about God and never gives a thought about the Lord Jesus, to the works-righteous moralist, who thinks his good behavior and law-keeping will please God and get him into heaven. Both those who are afar off and those who are near are still outside of the kingdom; both are at enmity with God; both need peace. And peace with God is available to both in one and only one way – through Christ; through faith in Him. But there is no peace to those wicked people who reject Him. Paul had this passage in mind: “I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” (Isa. 57:19-21). Now, if we don't preach that, we're derelict ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:18-20). And I'd take that one step further and say if we don't preach that as a staple item, we don't have any evidence that Christ is preaching through us, because that's what Christ came preaching. He alone is our peace, and He alone

makes peace. See Jon's sermon of 10-13-2024 and signs like "CHRIST OUR PEACE" and "NO PEACE FOR THE WICKED" that we regularly show to this generation.

So, humans are in desperate need of peace with God, and only God can give the peace. That's humanity's fundamental problem. The wicked are always restless, never satisfied, always at enmity with God. But, praise God, the Lord Jesus Christ has delivered us from that; He is our peace. The evidence of that peace is that "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." That is, both Jews and Gentiles. Both those who were near and those who were far – equal access. "As many as received Him." (John 1:12). "As many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39). "As many as were ordained to eternal life." (Acts 13:48). As many as the Father has given the Son (John 17:2). Even those have believed on Him, and through Christ, we now have peace and access to the Father. We can now approach Him. We, who were once estranged and at enmity, can now approach Him as children in the Holy of Holies and call Him "Father." This is about prayer, and you can see how the whole Trinity is involved here. It is through the Son – all access to the Father must be through the Son, because He is our High Priest, our righteousness, our life. He did, after all, suffer so "that He might bring us to God." (1 Peter 3:18). Nobody is admitted into the presence of the Father other than through the Son. If you don't recognize that, maybe that's why your prayers are cold and vain and lifeless. Our access is by (or, in) one Spirit – the Holy Spirit. Not our own spirits; not our own whims; not our own selfishness. But the Holy Spirit. He is why we want to pray in the first place. He teaches us what to pray for. He reveals God to us. He shows us our sins. He keeps our eyes on the Lord Jesus. He causes us to hunger and thirst after Him. Etc.

Fellowcitizens With The Saints...Of The Household Of God...An Holy Temple

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

He concludes by fleshing out the "one new man" concept – His elect, united into one new humanity. He lays out many of the implications of being joined together as the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He does this by introducing three new metaphors – citizenship, household, and temple. Why so many metaphors? Because one is not sufficient. There are too many facets of the church for one metaphor to do. Each metaphor can teach us different aspects. Just a few general notes about this section. 1st, verses 1-10 spoke of us being joined together with Christ (quickened together with Him, raised up together with Him, seated with Him). This section focuses on us being joined together with one another (fellowcitizens, fitly framed

together, builded together). We are hardwired to be social creatures. 2nd, Paul is using a rhetorical device called “paronomasia” which is a wordplay using words that have a similar sound. Here, he uses a bunch of words that come from the root word “oikos” which means “house” (foreigners, household, building, builded together, habitation). The “household” concept is very important. 3rd, these things describe a present reality; it’s not just something that is relegated to the future. If you would take a few minutes and consider what it is that you are in Christ, and the great blessings that we have in Him, things would be a lot better for you; it would change your outlook on a lot of things; a lot of your self-imposed problems would evaporate; a lot of the meaninglessness and lack of direction in your life would go away.

Citizenship

He says, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints.” This is a reference back to verse 12 where he referred to them as “aliens” and “strangers.” The idea is that you used to be strangers and foreigners – outsiders. Now, you’re joined to the saints as fellowcitizens. “Fellowcitizens” implies that we’re all citizens on equal footing – there are no lower-class citizens. The reference here is to a city or a country or a kingdom – any place where a person can be a citizen. A “stranger” refers to a non-citizen who was just staying temporarily in the city; just passing through. A “foreigner” refers to a resident alien – someone who is not a citizen but who lives in the city. Oftentimes the strangers and the foreigners look very similar to the citizens. So, the question of vital importance for each of us is, am I a citizen? Or am I a stranger or a foreigner? When the Lord counts and writes up the people, will I be found to have been born in Zion? (Psalm 87:5-6). You better make sure you know the answer. Many people here today are still lost. Here are some things to learn from this metaphor:

- Citizens are separate and distinct from people who are citizens of other places. You’re either a citizen of the kingdom of God, or you’re a citizen of the kingdom of the world and Satan.
- Citizens have a common ruler to whom they have allegiance. Ours is the King of kings.
- Citizens have a common way of life, language, goals. Ours are based on the Bible.
- Citizenship comes with certain privileges. We have all the spiritual blessings that we saw in Eph. 1. We have access to the King, who is ever ready to hear our petitions. We get to be fellowcitizens with one another, and the likes of Abraham, Jeremiah, Paul.
- Citizenship comes with certain protections. God is our refuge, shield, high tower, etc. No one shall ever pluck us out of His hand. We have the effectual prayers of the saints, and the safety of having fellowship with one another. We have the same armor of God.
- Citizenship comes with certain responsibilities. We must “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (2 Tim. 2:3). We must obey the Lawgiver; to do otherwise is treason – we have no right to live however we please. We must represent our King to the rest of the world – we can’t behave in a way that will bring a reproach on Christ.

- Citizens share common enemies. We're "set for the defence of the gospel." (Phil. 1:17).
- Citizens share common resources. We are to bear one another's burdens.

Household

He says that we are "of the household of God." A household includes the family of the house, so the household of God is the family of God, with God as our Father. This ties back to chapter 1: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." (v. 5). Clearly, this is a much more personal and intimate thing than citizenship. It's one thing to go in and have audience with the King; it's quite another thing to go in and have audience with your Father. Here are a few thoughts on the household:

- There's a certain elemental bond of love that ties the people in a household together. We have that same thing in the church.
- A household is made up of people with different personalities, needs, weaknesses, strengths, etc., who must learn to work with one another. Likewise in the church.
- Little children will go to their father with every trivial problem or hurt. If something is giving you distress, there's nothing too small to humbly take to your heavenly Father – in fact, He knows more about your problems than you do.
- Children in a household are heirs. In the church, we are also heirs. We will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). We are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Romans 8:17).
- A household must be maintained. If it isn't, it quickly goes into disrepair. This is the job of the Holy Ghost. He works to maintain the household.
- There are certain things that only make sense to the people in the household. Have you ever been in another household and felt out of place because you didn't understand what was going on? So it is with people who are not part of the household of God.
- In a household, you have responsibilities. In the household of God, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Mt. 5:16). You have a duty to let your light shine and glorify your Father.
- In a household, how children behave often reflects on their parents. Jesus: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:44-45). We have a duty to behave as the children of God, in accordance with His nature and commandments. You should ask yourself "Is this the way that a child of God ought to be behaving?"

Temple

The final metaphor to describe this unified church of Christ is a temple. As we go through this, you'll see the primacy of Christ in all of it. The first thing Paul tells us is that we're "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." The common thing that the apostles and

prophets shared is that they were given a message directly from God that they were supposed to teach. So, when he says “the foundation of the apostles and the prophets” he’s talking about the doctrine preached by the apostles and the prophets. I think he’s primarily talking about apostles and prophets in the NT, but this would also incorporate everything we have from the OT. Of course, the apostles and prophets themselves are part of the temple and they would be at the foundation of the superstructure – they’re part of the same temple that we’re part of. But the primary reference is to their doctrine. These were the ones who believed and preached foundational doctrine. Vague talk about being a Christian isn’t going to cut it. Flippant talk about “unity” isn’t going to cut it. If you don’t believe the doctrine, you’re not part of the temple, and we’re not going to have fellowship with you. Christianity and unity in the church is based on truth – not general talk about “Jesus” and “can’t we all just get along.” But he goes further and says, “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” The cornerstone is the stone that ties the whole thing together. The shape of the building is determined by it. The layout of the building is determined by it. The weight of the building rests on it. If the cornerstone is not square, the whole building is off. If it’s not level, the whole building is off. If it’s not strong, the building collapses. Everything must be tested against Christ. Any foundation laid by the apostles and prophets was laid out according to Christ, who is the primary foundation of the structure (see 1 Corinthians 3:11). A foundation is of utmost importance. You can’t take any risks. There can’t be any mistakes. Once you have a good, solid foundation, though, the building can proceed, and every part of the building must tie back to the foundation/cornerstone, or something is wrong. One other note here is that once the foundation is laid, it’s laid – there will be no repetition, no addition, no deduction.

The next description of the temple is: “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.” The whole building is fitly framed together in Christ, and it grows unto an holy temple in Christ. It is Christ who holds the whole thing together. This notion of “fitly framed” means “to join closely together” or “to render close-jointed together.” Paul made this word up, to convey the idea that God is a careful craftsman. Think of stones – not uniform bricks, but stones – where each stone is different in size, shape, weight. But they are all joined together. The image is that God is the stone mason, who personally and carefully selects each stone. He looks at the temple, and then he selects the perfect stone at the perfect time and puts it in the perfect place, right where it fits. To select one stone means that He is rejecting other stones (at least at that time). Sometimes He adds a lot of stones in rapid succession. Sometimes it seems like no stones are being added at all. Sometimes He chooses a massive stone. Sometimes He chooses a little tiny stone. Why? Because that’s the stone that was needed to fit in that place at that time in the building of the edifice. True unity is not that each stone is exactly the same – it is that all of these different stones are fitted together. Thank God for the differences He’s made among us! So, please consider that you are part of a much larger structure – you aren’t just a freestanding individual. You are fitly

framed with other stones. Don't cause problems for the stones around you. The most important part of a building is its cohesion; otherwise, it falls down into a pile of rubble.

Now, each stone must be prepared – some more than others. It must be chiseled down, so it lays flat, so it is perfectly jointed with the stones on either side, and so it can be ready to have another stone laid on top of it. It's a work of God, and He has many tools at His disposal (the preaching of the word, etc.). The preparation happens miraculously and invisibly. Look at what happened with Solomon's temple: "The house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building. " (1 Kings 6:7). The stone was prepared off-site, and then brought in when it was needed. This is what God does with us.

But further, this temple is growing! It isn't completed yet. It's a work in progress. It grows as God adds more of His elect. But it also grows organically – each individual stone continues to grow. Peter calls us "lively stones" (1 Peter 2:5). Growth implies life. It implies progression and change. It implies that we're not perfect. We grow in faith. We grow in knowledge. We grow in grace. Sometimes, God has to get the chisel out and do some more forming and molding. The initial preparation can be very painful, and the growth along the way can be very painful. Stone is a resistant material – it's hard to shape, and it's reluctant to fit in with other stones. But it's God as the stone mason who is doing it all, for His glory, and for our good.

He concludes with this: "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." We aren't just built together for no reason. This is where God lives! His Spirit has prepared this to be His dwelling place, and He dwells here through the Spirit. This is His church. This is His dwelling place. It is His Spirit who flows through the body. This is why it is called a "holy temple." We've been set apart as the dwelling place of God. We've been cleansed by the blood of Christ. We are to live holy lives. The prevailing characteristic of the church must be holiness. This is the place, in this age, where God has determined to have a unique presence (like the temple in the OT). This is where you find the habitation of God – within the whole body, and within each individual member of the body (see 1 Cor. 3:16-17, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16). He's right here present with us, beloved. If some famous person was sitting here today, many of you would be in awe about that – but when God Himself abides here with us, you treat it as a small thing. Don't have low thoughts of the church. We've been delivered from a state of being without Christ, without hope, and without God in this world, to a state of peace where we have access to the Father and make up the habitation of God Himself. Lord willing, I hope to talk some more about the church next time in Ephesians 3:1-13. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Ephesians 3:21).