

If you've ever been to Disneyland, you may have noticed at the entrance plaza there are hexagonal tiles with names of people who donated money. It's not uncommon for building projects to have tiles or bricks with names of those who contributed to the construction. But in today's passage we will see the building Paul talks about is not made of brick and mortar, but is rather a spiritual building in which all the parts interact and are unified in faith.

The passage starts with the word "consequently," which directs us to look at the context before the passage to see what is being referred to. Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians, but it was not only for them. It is what we call a circular letter, which means it was read in one church and passed down to other churches. Therefore it does not address specific issues in the Ephesian church the way letters like 1 Corinthians do. Generally, the church in Ephesus and the surrounding area consisted of more Gentiles than Jews. And there was a common issue of how the two groups should live and work together in the church. In the beginning of chapter 2, Paul mentions the wall of hostility between the Jews and Gentiles is now torn down in the Church. Jew wanted to hold on to their status as God's special chosen people, but in Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are equal; both are citizens and heirs of God's kingdom.

Paul then uses architectural imagery to describe the Church in 2:19-22. We all make up a building, whose foundation is the apostles and prophets and whose cornerstone is Jesus Christ. The cornerstone in ancient times was the first stone laid down in construction of a building. Placement of the cornerstone fixed the location and the orientation of the building. Likewise Jesus is the One to whom the entire church owes its existence and whom it refers to for direction. The church refers to Jesus for all its actions. Other clubs and groups may share a common goal, but the church's common goal must be centered on Jesus.

Next comes the foundation, which determines the layout of the building and supports the entire building. If the foundation is not sound, the entire building may sink or tilt, like the Millennium Tower in San Francisco. The foundation of the church is the apostles and prophets, which refer to the authors of Scripture, the disciples of Jesus, as well as the theologians throughout the history of the church who have helped define our theology. This foundation

provides a wealth of knowledge we can tap into for spiritual understanding. It is important to note that Jesus did not lay the cornerstone and the apostles and prophets did not lay the foundation. Jesus *is* the cornerstone and the apostles and prophets *are* the foundation.

And likewise we are the bricks. Just like an arch is built from the sides upward to support the keystone, we are built after the foundation, which supports us. So if we are the bricks, then what is our role as bricks? First, let's discuss what a good brick doesn't do. A good brick does not stray away from its intended design and purpose. Each brick has its own function, just as each of us have our function in church. Second, a good brick doesn't stand out or stick out from a wall, but rather the bricks in the wall form a continuous unified structure, just as we form a unified church in Christ. It's important to remember that buildings are built for a specific purpose. Houses are built for people to live in, and we are being built into a dwelling for God. Each brick doesn't show itself off, but it exists as a part of a structure that is meant to show God off. No one brick is more important than another, and each contributes to the whole.

So what does a good brick do? A good brick fits together with others to present and administer the gospel. In the English congregation we are trying to make all the contributors work together as a well-oiled machine. Whether it's the ushers, the worship team, the sound techs, the preacher, those on traffic duty, or those in charge of refreshments – we all work together for the same purpose. And no brick is more important. In Ephesus, the Jews valued themselves more than the Gentiles. But Gentiles are not secondary building materials, like plywood used to patch a wall; they are equals in Christ.

A good brick also gains support from those below and gives support to those above. Although each brick is equal in value, their position in the wall still matters. Jesus supports the entire Church. The apostles and prophets support all of us. And the longtime Christians can support those newer in the faith. Each of us should gain support from and give support to other members of the body.

In chapter 3, Paul describes his role as a brick, which is to provide a means by which the gospel is presented, similarly to our pastors. And though not all are called to be pastors, we each have our own skills that can benefit the whole. Let us each give our all to work together to build up this dwelling in which God is glorified.