

5. GOD'S BUILDING PROJECT

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Whenever church has its own building project, it is not unusual for them to forget the main reason of the building project. The building project is not to show off how big and wonderful their church is going to be, nor it is about what kind of rich congregation they have in their church. But it should be to bring more lost people to the Kingdom of God.

In ancient buildings, the cornerstone was first situated on the foundation. Then, all of the other stones were aligned to it. Without the cornerstone, they wouldn't know which direction the building was going to face or put together correctly. Without a firm foundation of the building, it doesn't matter how beautiful interior or exterior decorations are. Because if the foundation gives away, there wouldn't be anything left of that beautiful decorations.

The prime example of lousy foundation would be the Leaning Tower of Pisa. It is evident that the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy is going to fall. Scientists travel yearly to measure the building's slow descent. They report that the 8 stories 179-foot bell tower moves about one-twentieth of an inch a year, and is now 17 feet out of plumb. They further estimate that by the year 2007, the 810-year old tower will have leaned too far and will collapse onto the nearby ristorante, where scientists now gather to discuss their findings.

Quite significantly, the word "pisa" means "marshy land," which gives some clue as to why the tower began to lean even before it was completed. Also—its foundation is only 10 feet deep!

A. THE LIVING STONE

1 Peter 2:4-9 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Peter's picture here is that God is building a spiritual temple (a spiritual house) using living stones (Christians), those who have come to the ultimate Living Stone (Jesus). This spiritual house shows that as much as Israel had a temple, Christians have one also. Yet Jewish temple is spiritual, but Christians themselves are that temple.

As much as Israel was chosen by God, so is the church. As much as they had a priesthood by one selected tribe, Levite, so Christians are a holy priesthood. As much as they have sacrifices, so Christians must offer themselves up as living spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. However, the believer is his own priest before God. He does not need any mediator except his great High Priest, Jesus.

Each time someone trusts Christ as Savior, another stone is quarried out of the pit of sin and cemented into place through the work of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testaments, God dwelt among His people in a physical temple. In the New Testaments, God does not dwell in a localized place but in the hearts of all His children. I believe that we have a better deal than the OT people.

1Cor. 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

B. BUILDING MATERIALS

From the verse 5 to 9, we are called as:

- 1) **"Living stones"** - are being built into a spiritual house.
- 2) **"Holy and royal priesthood"** - to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ
- 3) **"Chosen people"** - not because we are special, but because of God's grace and love.
- 4) **"Holy nation"** - The things that once exclusively belonged to Israel - their election, priesthood, and calling, are now no longer the property to Israel alone - they are the property of every Christian, and in a greater, spiritual sense.
- 5) **"A people belonging to God"** - A historical museum may be filled with quite ordinary articles - things such as hats, canes, shoes, and so forth. But they are significant, because they once belonged to someone famous. God takes ordinary people like us, and because He has taken them, we are special.

We became a special group of people, not because of our intelligence, nor goodness of our hearts, nor the size of our faith, nor sincerity of our parts. But because of Jesus Christ is the Chief Corner Stone that was ordained by the Father before the beginning of the creation. Let's see v. 6-8 again:

1 Peter 2:6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."

1 Peter 2:7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,"

1 Peter 2:8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

C. THE CHIEF CORNER STONE

If we are being built into a spiritual house, there is no doubt who our Chief Cornerstone is - even though He was rejected by men, He has become the Chief Cornerstone in the work of building the church.

Jesus is also known as the stone or the Rock in many areas in the OT:

Jesus is the cornerstone of Psalm 118

The stumbling stone of Isaiah 8

The foundation stone of Isaiah 28

The supernatural stone of Daniel 2

The rock that gave Israel water in the wilderness of Ex 17

Therefore, everything in and of the church must be built upon Jesus Christ. If it is not, it has no foundation and no stability like the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

Those who reject the Chief Cornerstone, refusing to build on Him, instead stumble over Him - instead of being their salvation, Jesus becomes to them a rock of offense.

Jesus quoted this passage from Psalm 118 in regard to Himself (Matthew 21:42). It is appointed that those who are disobedient to the word should stumble over Jesus; that He would be judgment to them if they would not take Him as their salvation.

Matt. 21:42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

D. GOD'S CHOSEN

When we review what we learned about the thoughts God has for us, you are talking about a major self-esteem. Not like some psychologists insist that we need more self-esteem by ourselves, God regards us as His chosen people. What can you beat that?

E. APPLICATIONS

So, now our chests are sticking out, and pulling our spiritual suspenders. We feel good about what we are called. What should be our responses to God?

1 Peter 2:10-12 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, 1) abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 2) having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, 3) by your good works which 4) they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Peter is telling us that we are sojourners and pilgrims of this world. We don't belong here, this is not our home. Our home is in heaven and we have citizenship of heaven.

As sojourners and pilgrims, we need to do these:

1) LET'S LIVE A CLEAN LIFE, ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS.

It is easy for us to see how the pursuit of fleshly lusts can destroy our body physically - just ask an alcoholic who is dying of liver disease or the sexually immoral person with AIDS or one of the 350,000 people on this earth who contracted a sexually transmitted disease in the last 24 hours. But Peter reminds us that fleshly lusts also war against the soul. The disease and death of the inner man is a penalty that no one given over to the flesh escapes.

2) LET'S LEAVE NO ROOM FOR SLANDER.

When the ancient Greek philosopher Plato was told that a certain man had been making a slanderous charges against him. His response was, "I will live in such a way that no one will believe what he says." The most convincing defense is the silent integrity of our character, not how strongly we deny the charges.

3) LET'S DO GOOD DEEDS AMONG UNBELIEVERS.

Our good deeds should not be limited to the family of God, but should also extend to those outside the family.

Matt. 5:46-47 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

What makes the story of the Good Samaritan so compelling? The merciful deeds were done on behalf of a total stranger. That is how we win the right to be heard—not by a slick, mass-advertising campaign, but by our actions.

4) LET'S NEVER FORGET THAT WE ARE BEING WATCHED.

The world is watching us to see if what we believe is true, as this story:

In the summer of 1805, a number of Indian chiefs and warriors met in council at Buffalo Creek, NY, to hear a presentation of the Christian message by Mr. Cram from the Boston Missionary Society. After the sermon, a response was given by Red Jacket, one of the leading chiefs. Among other things, the chief said, "Brother, we are told that you have been preaching to the white people in this place. These people are our neighbors. We are acquainted with them. We will wait a little while and see what effect your preaching has upon them. If we find it does them good, make them honest and less disposed to cheat Indians, we will then consider again of what you have said."

Walk the walk, talk the talk!