

How God Builds His Church

I Peter 2:4-10

INTRODUCTION:

All Stand and Read Scripture

1 Peter 2:4-10 (NASB)

⁴ And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For *this* is contained in Scripture:

“BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER *stone*,
AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

⁷ This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve,

“THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*,”

⁸ and, “A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed.

⁹ But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

Prayer

The physical building that surrounds us here which is composed of wood and concrete, but the building of God, the church of our Lord that is composed of "**living stones**".

The New Testament uses a number of different descriptive images to show us what the church is like.

For example, the church is described as a family into which we are born again with God as our Father and many brothers and sisters in the faith.

The church is also described as a kingdom wherein we are citizens, with Jesus Christ ruling as our king, to whom we have an obligation to be completely submissive.

Other scriptures talk about the church as a body with each of us performing different roles with Jesus Christ as our head.

Other verses describe us as branches of a vine.

John 15:5 (NASB)

⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

But this morning, I want us to explore the imagery of the church as a building, with every Christian a stone built into that building. **We Are God's Building!**

1 Peter 2:4-5 (NASB)

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ILLUSTRATION:

There's a story about a king of Sparta in ancient Greece who boasted to a visiting monarch about the mighty walls of Sparta. But the guest looked around and didn't see any walls, and finally he said to his host, "I'd like to see those walls. Show them to me!" The Spartan ruler pointed with great satisfaction to some disciplined and well-trained troops, part of Sparta's mighty army, and exclaimed, "There they are! Those are the walls of Sparta!"

Just as each Spartan soldier was viewed by the king as a brick in his mighty wall, so we are viewed by God as "living stones... built up as a spiritual house".

Paul used this same imagery.

Ephesians 2:19-22 (NASB)

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

BODY:

I. The Unity of the Building

Here in Ephesians 2, Paul goes from the concept of **citizenship in the kingdom** to the **concept of family** to the **concept of a building**. And that may seem to be somewhat of an anticlimax. After all, a building is rather cold and impersonal compared with the relationship of a family. But if you look carefully, you'll see what's in Paul's mind. He's actually moving closer, higher, to a more intimate relationship, because he is stressing the closeness of the members of the very house of God. We are "being fitted together".

You see, it's possible for the members of a **family** to be scattered throughout the face of the earth. Some of you have family members who are thousands of miles away. In a family like that, you're still related, still members of one another, but you're widely separated and don't see one another for years at a time.

But in the figure of a **building**, there's no separation of stones that make up the wall. Everything is closely joined together, "**fitted together**". The KJV says we're "**fitly framed together**". The church of Jesus Christ draws us together and bonds us together in a way that nothing else can.

ILLUSTRATION:

This church building was built in 1969. Before its construction it was nothing but a bunch of scattered pieces. There was a stack of two-by-fours in a lumberyard. There was a box of nails in a hardware store. There was a stack of shingles laying on concrete. There was a roll of carpet in somebody's warehouse. There was concrete that hadn't even been created yet. But now, due to great planning and a lot of hard work and expertise, all those pieces and hundreds more have all come together and been joined into one unit.

The same thing is true of God's building, the church. Many of us who are now Christians were separated in the past into different pieces. Pieces that had little in common. Different economic situations. Different ethnic backgrounds. Different interests. But Jesus Christ, the master architect and master builder, has taken us and put us together, joined us together in His building.

What Paul said of the Jews and Gentiles, who had been separated for hundreds of years, is also true of us.

Ephesians 2:13-14 (NASB)

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into one* and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

Jesus Christ takes every part, every stone, and

- **knocks off the rough edges,**
- **chiseling a piece here,**
- **sanding a piece there,**
- **smoothing it out,**
- **cuts it precisely,**
- **and fits it snugly and beautifully with every other part in His building.**

And when he's done, there's nothing out of place. There are no defective or inappropriate pieces. And together we form a building.

Not just any building, but a temple.

That concept would remind the **Jews** that for centuries they had looked to the temple in Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God.

The concept would also cause the Gentiles in Ephesus to think about the temple of Diana and the other pagan temples in which they believed their deities lived.

But, as Stephen points out in Acts 7:48, our God “**does not dwell in temples made with hands.**” Rather his temple is found in the hearts of his people. So we’re not just any building. We’re a building with the highest purpose that any building could possibly have. **Our body is a temple, the dwelling place of God!**

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Peter preached to the Jews at the temple with the assistance of the Holy Spirit and told them of their sin. They were "pricked in the heart" and repented of their sins and were baptized. About 3000 souls were added to the church.

We don't just go to church in a church building. **We, who are God's people in Christ Jesus, are the church!**

The word "church" as rendered in the New Testament comes from the Greek term *ekklesia* which is formed from **two** Greek words meaning "an assembly" and "called out ones." In other words, the New Testament church is a body of believers who have been called out from the world by God to live as his people under the authority of Jesus Christ.

When Christ died on the cross for our sins, He purchased the church with His own blood. Christ purchased believers through his sacrificial death to set us free from the slavery of sin and to make us righteous or sinless before God.

II. The Church is Built Upon Christ, the Cornerstone.

1 Peter 2:6-8 (NASB)

⁶ For *this* is contained in Scripture:

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AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

⁷ This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve,
“THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
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⁸ and, “A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”;

for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed.

Peter quotes from Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22 and points out that Jesus Christ, while chosen by God, was rejected by men. He wasn't the kind of Messiah they were expecting, so they stumbled over him. The rock they considered to be a nuisance -- in the way -- was then used by God as the cornerstone of his building.

Jesus, the cornerstone that some saw as a stumbling rock was actually a very precious stone. The foundation is the most important part of any building. The chief cornerstone is the most important stone.

ILLUSTRATION:

The cornerstone was the major structural part of ancient buildings. It had to be strong enough to support what was built upon it, and it had to be precisely laid, because every other part of the structure was oriented to it. The cornerstone was the support, the orientation, and the unifier of the entire building. That is what Jesus Christ is to God's building, the church. The whole building ties together because of the cornerstone.

John 14:6 (NASB)

⁶ Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

So it is that everything is built on Jesus Christ. He is the great cornerstone of our faith. And we are living stones joined together on that foundation.

III. The Need for a Blueprint

The image of the church as a building suggests to me the need for a blueprint. The scripture is our blueprint.

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for they stumble because they are **disobedient to the word**, and to this *doom* they were also appointed.

Unbelievers stumble because they do not follow the blueprint written in God's Word. If we are not willing to read and follow God's blueprint, then the cornerstone will be a stumbling block for us as well.

In the Old Testament, when the Jews built the tabernacle in the wilderness, God gave them very explicit instructions. The book of Exodus tells in great detail about how the tabernacle was to be so long and so wide and so high. It was to have a certain number of wooden poles laid out in a particular way. It was to have a certain number of curtains made out of a certain type of material. Everything was very detailed, and the Jews knew that they were to build that place of worship just the way God told them to.

When it came time to build the temple, God once again gave explicit instructions, this time through David. When Solomon built that temple, those plans were followed so carefully by his workmen that everything fit together on the construction site. According to I Kings 6:7, they didn't have to use any hammers or chisels at the worksite. But they were able to do it because it was planned that way, and they followed the plans.

It makes sense that if we are to be a part of God's building today, then there are blueprints that need to be followed. And there are. **Our blueprint is the Word of God.** Everything we say and do must be guided by what God has told us. And if we ever leave that blueprint behind and start building on our own we will be building a house on sand. (Matt. 7:24-27)

Paul said,

Colossians 3:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, *do all in the name of* (or by the authority of) **the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.**

IV. **The Building of God is Under Construction**

ILLUSTRATION:

Sarah Winchester was heir of the fortune from the Winchester rifle. She inherited twenty million dollars and had an additional income of one thousand dollars a day. That's a lot of money today, but it was an enormous sum in the late 1800's. Sarah moved to California, and bought an eight-room farmhouse plus 160 adjoining acres. She hired 16 carpenters and put them to work. For the next 38 years, a crew worked continuously to build a mansion. When Sarah died, the house covered six acres and had six kitchens, thirteen bathrooms, forty stairways, 47 fireplaces, 52 skylights, 467 doors, ten thousand windows, 160 rooms and a bell tower. The house never was finished.

I think that describes what happens in God's building. He's been building it for almost 2,000 years. Every time there is a baptism, every time someone is added to the body of Christ, another **living stone** is set into place. A room here, a fireplace there. And that building will remain under construction until Christ comes again. It's always growing because Christians are continually being added.

The church began on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem fifty days after Jesus' death on the cross. Peter preached to the Jews at the temple with the assistance of the Holy Spirit and told them of their sin.

When they were told that they had crucified the Son of God, they were "pricked in the heart" and repented of their sins and were baptized. About 3000 souls were added to the church.

We build on the work that others have done. In the scripture from Ephesians 2:20 that we have previously read, Paul speaks about being "**built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**". Christ was the main cornerstone and the apostles and prophets laid a foundation on top of the cornerstone. They were the first ones to preach the gospel and convert people through their evangelistic efforts. Others picked up where they left off and added more stones to the building.

1 Corinthians 3:6-9 (NASB)

⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷ So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. ⁸ Now he who

plants and he who waters are one; **but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.** ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Do you see the joint effort here? Paul built up the Corinthians church for a while, and when he left, Apollos and others came along and picked up where he left off. It's the same way here in this congregation.

We can all look back on our lives and be able to identify one or two people who planted and watered the seed for us to be saved.

God is still building and He wants us to plant the seed and water that growth to maturity. My challenge to all of you here this morning is to continue to labor for Christ by reaching out to others. **God promises that our labor will be rewarded!**

CONCLUSION:

In the few minutes that we have remaining, I want us to look together at what Peter says about why we've been built. It's important that we don't forget the purpose for which we've been built.

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NASB)

⁹ But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, **so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;** ¹⁰ for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

If we're not careful, we can forget the purpose for which we were constructed. We can become so consumed with the building process, that we forget the one in whose honor the building is intended.

Peter calls us back to our purpose, "**to proclaim the praises of him who called us**". We live in a world of darkness, a world that doesn't God. It is our responsibility to "**proclaim the praises of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light.**"

We don't exist so that people can say, "What a great building this is". We don't even exist so that people can say, "What a great bunch of people this is." We exist so that people can look at us and say, "**What a great God we have!**"

This morning we extend an **INVITATION**, it is an invitation to be added as a **living stone** in the building of God. It is an invitation that calls you out of a world of darkness into God's marvelous light. It is an invitation for those of you who are not the people of God to become a part of the people of God. And, above all, it is an invitation for those of you who have not obtained mercy to take hold of the mercy of God.

God Be with You till We Meet Again

God be with you till we meet again, By His counsels guide uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you, God be with you till we meet again.
Till we meet...Till we meet, Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
Till we meet...Till we meet, God be with you till we meet again.