

Review

Most recently in this epistle, Peter has ministered to us about the necessity of fervently loving other Christians - a sincere love of the brethren. He's told us about putting aside things malice, envy, and evil-speaking about our brothers and sisters in Christ.

As we continue on into verse four of chapter two, Peter continues talking about the loving unity we're growing into. But in the word pictures he makes, he uses some terms that might not be very familiar to us...

2:4-8 We Are Living Stones

Peter says that we are living stones being built up as a spiritual house. Sounds rather odd, doesn't it?

But when you think about it, it is the perfect analogy. It is interesting to me that the first time the Bible uses the word "church," it is described as something that is built. Jesus said,

Matt. 16:18 "...upon this rock I will build My church..."

The church is a building. But the building material isn't the steel, wood and stone which surrounds us. The building material is us. We are the living stones that make up the church of the living God (1Tim. 3:15). And so the spiritual house is not this structure. It is us as we are fastened and fitted together, and united in one purpose - to be the house of God.

Peter says that we are all bricks in the same wall. And this analogy helps to understand why we need to practice loving unity. Can you imagine if the bricks that form the walls in your own house began to fight and disagree? "I'm not sitting next to him!" "I don't want to be in that group!" "She's making me uncomfortable!" As Jesus said, "Any...

Matt. 12:25 "...house divided against itself will not stand."

How can we keep (or stop) this from happening in the house of God? Peter says here that in coming to Him, we will be built up.

The Foundation

You can't build up a building without a good foundation. And of

course, you recall that Jesus spoke of...

Luke 6:48 ...a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.

It is all-important that a house be built on a good, solid foundation.

What foundation is the church built upon? Jesus told Peter, "Upon this rock I will build My church." What rock was that? Many people say that Jesus meant Peter was going to be the foundation of the church. (How would you like to have that kind of pressure? Any church built with me as the foundation might as well be a house of cards, 'cause it's coming down soon!) Fortunately, that is not the case. Instead, when Jesus had asked the disciples,

Matt. 16:15-16 "...who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The foundation Jesus builds the church on is that proclamation: He is the Christ, the Son of God.

And so the way we will be built up is coming to Him. This helps us to understand the words that Peter uses next...

He Is The Cornerstone

You see, not only is Jesus our foundation, but He is also described in verse six as the cornerstone. Peter is quoting Isaiah 28, which says:

Is. 28:16-17 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the level..."

In this prophesy of Jesus as the cornerstone, God talks about justice being the measuring line and righteousness the level. This is His elaboration on this analogy of the cornerstone.

In the days before laser levels, rangefinders, CAD systems, Global Position System survey equipment, and other high-tech gadgetry, there were more rudimentary methods of getting a building built right. Back

then, the cornerstone was the starting point for all building above the foundation. It was perfectly leveled and precisely aligned. Throughout the rest of the building project, the cornerstone became the basis for determining every measurement, uniformity, and alignment.

Jesus is the cornerstone of this building that we're forming. And that means He should be our standard of measure and alignment. And so, as cliché as it's become, all of us living stones really should be asking ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" Or - more precisely - asking, "What standard has Jesus set? How can I align myself to Jesus in this situation?"

Rejected By Men

Unfortunately, not everybody is - or was - on board with this plan. Remember, He is "the stone which the builders rejected." Peter's sources here are Psalm 118 and Isaiah 8.

Psa. 118:22 The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone.

Is. 8:14-15 "...He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, and a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Many will stumble over them, then they will fall and be broken..."

The builders rejected this cornerstone. Instead of accepting it, they stumbled over it. Again, this is picturesque speech for the fact that the Jews failed to receive Jesus Christ as their Messiah. He was the cornerstone, but the builders rejected Him. They were offended by Him, and stumbled over Him.

Why did they reject Him to their own stumbling? In verse eight, Peter says it's because they were disobedient to the Word of God. Ultimately, that is what anyone's rejection of Jesus Christ comes down to: they refuse to obey God's Word.

Peter had used these words before, in a very public setting. In the book of Acts we read that he and John had miraculously healed a lame man, and drawn a crowd. They used the opportunity to preach the res-

urrection of Jesus. But the leaders of the Jews threw Peter and John in jail for this (Acts 4:3). Instead of keeping quiet, Peter and John simply turned around and preached the same message to them:

Acts 4:8-12 ...Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead - by this name this man stands here before you in good health. He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

The Jewish leaders had rejected salvation. The builders had rejected the very cornerstone of the temple, and stumbled over the rock. Ultimately, they would be crushed by that same rock, for Jesus had said,

Matt. 21:44 “...he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”

This is why I have chosen to fall on the rock instead of it falling on me! My heart has been broken over sin and enmity with God. And if you too are one of the living stones that make up the church - if you are one of those stones aligned to the chief cornerstone - then Peter has some encouraging words for you...

2:9-10 What You Were, What You Are

We are a royal priesthood for God. But not like the Levite priests. You see, this priesthood is far superior to the Levitical priesthood. The Levitical priesthood came into being when the people of Israel rebelled against God, and the firstborn were disqualified (Exod. 32:21-28; Num. 3:12). But this priesthood was made by an oath of God and lasts forever (Heb. 7:20-21). Only a select few Levites were able to make sacrifices to

God and only one of them once a year was able to enter in before the throne of God. But in this priesthood, we continually present ourselves as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And, we are able to continually...

Heb. 4:16 ...draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- We were not a priesthood before, but we are now.
- We did not belong to God before, but we do now.
- We were in darkness before, but are in light now.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished all of these things for us - for all of us. So let's remember that we're all living stones in the same wall, the same temple. To be structurally sound, we must live in unity, being aligned to our Chief Cornerstone.