

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
June 12, 2016

Becoming a Living Stone

1 Peter 2:4-6

2:4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,

2:5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

2:6 For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

The Bible compares a church to several things. This morning, we read it compares to a building. In matter of fact, Peter was not the first one to compare a church to a building. Lord Jesus Himself and Paul said a church was a building.

For any buildings to be built, they need a foundation, materials and construction. This is applicable not only to a visible church structure but also to an invisible church as a body of Christ. Furthermore, it is applicable to each individual Christian who is a part of the body of Christ. We would like to learn about the foundation, materials and construction of the church as well as our life.

1. Foundation

First of all, let's think about foundation. That is Jesus Christ. In verse 4, it says, "a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious," and verse 6 says, ""Behold, I am laying in Zion

a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." Here, a cornerstone is a stone that serves as a foundation for the building. Jesus Christ is a foundation, a cornerstone of church as well as our life. Whatever a spectacular building you build, it cannot be a real church unless it is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

And it is the same for our life. Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." All of us build a house called "life" and it is very important how we build it. But what is more important is upon which we build our house. If you build a house on a fault, it would collapse when an earthquake hits. If you build a house on the land prone to landslide, then it would flow when flood hits. Unless our life is built upon a solid rock of Jesus Christ, our life would collapse when we have calamity or face difficulties. However, if you build a house on Jesus Christ, your life will be solid and it will endure in suffering or trials.

A foundation is most important not only for a building but also for anything. Before you major specialty in collage or graduate school, you have to have a basic knowledge before you graduate high school. If you engage in sport, you cannot be a strong player unless you have a basic physical fitness. In case of faith, you need even more foundation. It is important to ask yourself whether you come from the faith that believes in Jesus Christ and whether you have a strong foundation of faith.

If you are a long-time believer, you might think that you already have a foundation and there is no need to learn basics. However, the foundation and basics are different. What is said in Hebrew 6:1 “Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity” does not mean you should ignore the elementary doctrine or leave from there. To grow in faith, you have to have a good foundation of faith as well as you have to return to the foundation at any time. Those who grow in faith are those who have solidified the faith without cutting corners.

It takes time to get to know Jesus Christ and realize internal problems and come to the decision to follow Jesus. However, it is not just the matter of taking time and achieving it. It is necessary to study the truth of salvation in order and absorb the knowledge. If you take a step by step and build a foundation of faith, you will come to the decision of faith more easily and you will obtain faithful life following the decision of faith. Even if your faith is weakened by various trials, those who have a solid foundation of faith know where to return. They will be supported during the trial and further deepen the faith.

2. Materials

Next, let's think about the materials of the building on the foundation. Peter says, “you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house” in verse 3. He says, “you.” This “you” means all Christians. Anyones who believe in Jesus Christ become the materials of the spiritual house, that is Church. Peter became a stone of the temple. Then, he can talk to others to be built up as a stone of Church.

You can read the account that Peter was called “stone” or “rock” in Matthew chapter 16. The Lord asked his disciples, saying, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter replied him for all of the disciples, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Then Lord Jesus answered him, “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.” Peter’s original name was “Simon, Son of Jonah.” “Peter” was a nick name that means “rock” or “stone”. Simon was called “Peter” since this time, and the name became his official name. I think Peter was grateful to be a stone of the building on Jesus Christ, the Foundation, and was proud of the name every time he was called by the name.

Peter and other disciples took important roles in Early Church. They were big stones directory connected to Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone. However Church could not be built only by apostles or other leaders. The building, made of stones, needs not only big stones, but also smaller stones. It needs different stones in size, shape, color, and hardness. Therefore, Peter called all Christians, saying, “Like I became a stone of Church by Lord’s calling, you also offer yourselves answering the calling. Become living stones, and to be built as the spiritual house.” All of us are precious and indispensable materials for the spiritual house.

3. Construction

Finally, let’s think about the construction. When thinking about it, we have an important perspective; that is, the building we are going to establish is not the regular one. As written in verse 5 of today’s reading, saying, “...to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ,” we are about to establish the

Holy Temple where the priesthood would offer Spiritual sacrifices.

The temple is the place where God is, and where people meet God. Lord Jesus called His body the Holy Temple, in John 2:21, says, “But he was speaking about the temple of his body” because He is the Son of God and glorifies the Father, and because people meet Father through Jesus Christ. Churches are the body of Christ. If so, as Jesus called Himself the Holy Temple, the Churches have to be the Holy Temple. They have to be the place where people meet God through the verses spoken there and the worships held there.

In verse 5, it says, “You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house...” This word, “spiritual house” means invisible building, contrary to visible ones. However, here, the verse literally includes the meaning of “spiritual house,” where the Holy Spirit lives in. Church and also each Christian are the spiritual house where the Holy Spirit lives. In 2 Corinthians 6:19-20, saying, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” When listening to that each of us is the temple, we may be ashamed by the serious calling over our sinful inside. Yet God bought us with a price, the life of Jesus Christ, and redeemed us; if I state more clearly, God redeemed us from the death of sin and made us His children, and recreated us to let people meet God through meeting us and let God be glorified through our lives. If thinking of such grace, we would surely be leaded to the thought we would love to answer Him.

In the Old Testament, the temple was designed by God Himself and established following His order in detail. The temple was God’s own

and it was sanctified. Likewise, the Churches and each Christian are the present temples, so that they would be called for being established by following His purpose and His will. We are bought with a price and we have to glorify Him as the verses having just stated a minute ago. We have to teach that we were selected by His purpose and called for answering His will.

I once read a book written by Dr. Chuck Swindoll, and found that he nourished his faith in Peninsula Bible Church before he went to Okinawa as a soldier. Then I visited the church. In front of the worship hall, the verse, “You are bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” was engraved in the huge letters. We shall engrave this verse in our heart, too. When those who assuring themselves of the temple of Holy Spirit gather, Churches could become the spiritual house where the Holy Spirit lives in, and become the place where people meet God and Son of God, Jesus Christ.

I have one another story. Lots of men tried to pull up the huge stone with a rope. They lined up the bolts under the stone to make it easier to carry, and relining them up over and over after moving a little bit. One traveler passing by, asked, “Why are you all carrying such a big stone?” One man replied, “I don’t know such thing. I just came and work for a day, but it doesn’t pay enough for this hard work” with rough face expression. Another guy with a sweaty face, however, said showing white teeth, “Man, don’t you know the hugest church in this town is going to be established on the hill. This stone is the basis of it. Now, keep going guys!”

We know clearly which man was satisfied with work of the day. This is the one who knew the purpose of his work. We also shall know

the purpose that God redeemed us and made us the Holy Temple, and be established as the spiritual house.

(Prayer)

Dear Father, you bought us with a price, the life of Jesus Christ, and made us yours. Moreover, you made us where you live. Let us follow your will calling us the establishment as the temple. Furthermore, let us taste the joy to be established as your temple. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.