

Sermon Series: The Faith Family

Sermon Title: "A House of Living Stones"

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 2:1-12 (Supplemental Passages Used: 2 Chronicles 2:4-6, Acts 17:24-30, Romans 12:9-11, Ephesians 4:17-18, Psalm 34:8, Psalm 118:22-23, Matthew 21:42-43, Jeremiah 7:1-7, Ephesians 2:10, John 3:16-21, Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 6:10-20)

Sermon Summary: This message looks at what it means to be the church rather than just attending church! Twelve verses of 1 Peter are examined to gain insight on the building principles which apply to the spiritual house of living stones God is building. Seven principles are taken from the text in order to help people get excited about being built into a living sanctuary in which God dwells by way of His Holy Spirit! There are practical applications to be discovered in all seven principles, but one of the most important is in the purpose of the church! Much of what we do as followers of Christ flows from God's purpose for His faith family!

Questions to think about!

- 1. Why is site preparation and proper building materials so important when it comes to a house of living stones?**
- 2. If you accept Christ as your Savior but you do not grow in your relationship with Him by consuming spiritual nourishment, you will gain heaven, but your life here will continue to be a mess! Why?**
- 3. Sometimes, even people who have been in the throws of sin and have been set free and forgiven, if they are not walking in fellowship with Jesus and with fellow believers, they can be enticed to go back into the sin that once enslaved them. How can that happen?**
- 4. Why does a foundation or cornerstone matter so much in the building of a spiritual house of living stones?**
- 5. What are two major purposes God has in mind for the house He is building out of living stones?**
- 6. What does it mean to say "living stones have choices?"**
- 7. In what ways can the house of living stones God is building be considered "multi-purpose?"**

Introduction:

"You didn't want heaven without us, so Jesus, You brought heaven down

My sin was great, Your love was greater, what could separate us now"

That truth just stirs my heart! But we don't have to wait for heaven to experience the presence of God in our lives! Today we're going to talk about how God is building us into a house of living stones here on this earth where He can dwell by His Holy Spirit! What does that mean? We're going to find out! Let's pray and ask God to teach us today! Pray!

Understanding what it means to be the family of God is so important. Last week we talked about the fact that in Jesus Christ we are no longer outcast. We are children of God, brothers and sisters in Christ, members of God's family and fellow citizens of God's Kingdom! But what is God's purpose for His faith family? Remember last week I told you we would talk about that in detail later. Later is now! So what is God's purpose for His family and how is that purpose

revealed in the building process of us being built into a house of living stones? Before we answer this, we'll do a little background study. Back in the Old Testament God's presence was found at the tabernacle (the tent of the Lord), and later in the temple. His presence was present and powerful in the Holy of Holies or Most Holy Place. The tabernacle and temple were tangible places where people could go to worship, sacrifice, and pray to God. But even King Solomon, who built the temple, knew that God could not be contained in a building. Listen...

2 Chronicles 2:4 Now I am about to build a temple for the Name of the LORD my God and to dedicate it to him for burning fragrant incense before him, for setting out the consecrated bread regularly, and for making burnt offerings every morning and evening and on Sabbaths and New Moons and at the appointed feasts of the LORD our God. This is a lasting ordinance for Israel.(NIV)

2 Chronicles 2:5 "The temple I am going to build will be great, because our God is greater than all other gods.(NIV)

2 Chronicles 2:6 But who is able to build a temple for him, since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him? Who then am I to build a temple for him, except as a place to burn sacrifices before him?(NIV)

This sentiment was echoed in the New Testament book of Acts when Paul talked to the people of Athens. They were superstitious people who had erected statues to all the pagan gods and even had one for the "Unknown god" just in case they missed someone. Paul had this to say to them...

Acts 17:24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.

Acts 17:25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

Acts 17:26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

Acts 17:27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

Acts 17:28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

Acts 17:29 "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill.

Acts 17:30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

This leads us to our text for today. You may be wondering what all this talk about the temple has to do with "the faith family of God." God is building a new kind of temple in which He will dwell. It's not made of physical stones and mortar. It is a spiritual temple housed in the flesh and blood of God's people, God's family. Paul just said...

Acts 17:28 'For in him we live and move and have our being...'

So I guess you could say the house God is building in us is a mobile home or an RV! The church is not a building but a people! We don't go to church, we are the church! And as such we take Jesus everywhere we go, and we represent Jesus everywhere we go! The Greek word for church is Εκκλησία, which means a gathering or assembly of people. Originally a gathering of citizens for conducting public business, so probably a political body. But early Christians took the word to identify their gatherings as the Body of Christ. We will focus on 12 verses from 1 Peter 2 today, but let me read to you the central verse. Peter says...

1 Peter 2:4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—

1 Peter 2:5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Why would God build His house out of living stones, you and me, and what is His purpose? What does this mean? As we unpack our text, we will discover seven building principles that will reveal the meaning of God's purpose for building His faith family into a house of living stones! The first principle is this:

Site preparation and proper building materials are a must!

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

God's building a new kind of temple and He's doing it through His family and there are some things God doesn't want in His new home. This verse gives us a short, but important list of things we are not to allow on our list of building materials or to allow in the house) to throw out of the house...

"malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind."

Paul gave a more detailed list in Colossians 3...

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Colossians 3:6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

Colossians 3:7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

Colossians 3:8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips.

Colossians 3:9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

Two illustrations here. One is with site preparation. When you are building a house it is critical you get this right! When you clear the trees from where the house pad and foundation will be, you must totally dig up the root system of the trees. If you don't get the roots, years later they

will rot and cause sinkholes under your foundation and that will lead to cracking, shifting or even collapsing of the foundation. And what's built on a sinking foundation begins to sink as well. More on foundation in a few. Second Illustration: Building materials are important! Anybody remember the drywall that came from China back in Katrina days that was tainted with a toxic chemical? This drywall would corrode and corrupt the home and make it stink. It was so strong that people even had to replace some of their appliances due to corrosion. Sins of the spirit like malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander, immorality, impurity, anger, slander, lying and the like are like tainted drywall to the spiritual house God is building! He doesn't want these things to harm His precious family so He tells us to rip those things out of our lives! How do we get rid of these kinds of things? Paul tells us in the book of Romans...

Romans 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Romans 12:11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

If you want to get rid of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy or slander you must...

Be sincere! Don't be fake, and false! Hate what is evil! Get to the place where you despise sin! Cling to what is good! Hold tenaciously to things that are right! Be devoted to one another in brotherly love! True devotion includes a willingness to sacrifice for one another, forgive one another, serve one another, and hold one another accountable! Honor one another above yourselves! Humble yourself by putting the needs of others before the needs of you! Never be lacking in zeal! Love God with a passionate heart! Keep your spiritual fervor! Let the fires of conviction flame high in your life. And, if you really want to get rid of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander, serve The Lord and not yourself!!

Unpacking the next verse will lead us to our second building principle...

A living house requires daily maintenance in the form of nourishment!

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

Remember, this new temple God is building is not brick and mortar, it is alive. Therefore it must be fed. We should be hungry and crave the spiritual food God has for us. Peter tells us to crave the "Pure" spiritual milk. Undiluted. Not watered down. You don't give babies skim milk. They need the nutrition from whole milk. My granddad used to call skim milk, chalk water! Peter goes on to give the purpose for drinking the pure spiritual milk...

"that you may grow up in your salvation."

So many think "well I'm saved, that's all that matters right?" Wrong. Let me tell you why this is tragically wrong. If you accept Christ as your Savior but you do not grow in your relationship with

Him, you will gain heaven, but your life here will continue to be a mess! Why? Because you haven't thrown out the world's ways or learned the ways of God by daily consuming His Word which is a blueprint for life!

God's Word speaks to this...

Ephesians 4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

Ephesians 4:18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

And at some point you have to get off the milk and mature to solid food. It's important because we are being built into a house of living stones. The writer of Hebrews put it this way...

Hebrews 5:13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

Hebrews 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

As we continue unpacking our text we discover yet another building principle...

There are many builders, but none as good as The Lord!

1 Peter 2:3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

I've shared with young people many times that I've been on both sides of the fence and I don't want to go back to the life I lived before meeting Jesus ever again. It was not a good place. It was not a pretty place. It was not a happy place. The spiritual house the world was building for me was not good and was bound to crumble at some point with disastrous results. Why would anyone want to stay in the world once they've tasted that the Lord is good? The Psalmist said...

Psalm 34:8 Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

But let me answer the question I just asked: Why would anyone want to stay in the world once they've tasted that the Lord is good? Here's the reason: Satan is a deceiver and the world in which he roams, is full of deception! Sometimes, even people who have been in the throws of sin and have been set free and forgiven, if they are not walking in fellowship with Jesus and with fellow believers, they can be enticed to go back into the sin that once enslaved them. How can that happen? Sin can look so appealing and it certainly can be pleasurable for a moment, but then come the consequences and the hurt, the pain, the devastation! But we should know better! Why? Because as Paul said...

Colossians 3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Colossians 3:2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Colossians 3:3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Okay, we're not through unpacking and we're about to discover a critical building principle...

The importance of the foundation and cornerstone cannot be overemphasized!

1 Peter 2:4 As you come to him, the living Stone —rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—

Okay, wait a minute. There's no such thing as a living stone Pastor Larry! Yes there is! Who is this Living Stone? What is a living stone and why does it matter that the living stone was rejected by men?

It was prophesied in Psalm 118:22-23 that the Messiah would be rejected.

Psalm 118:22 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;

Psalm 118:23 the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

When you research the meaning of a cornerstone or a capstone you'll find this definition on almost every search page, so I do not know who originally wrote this definition, but I can tell you it's a good definition...

"In relation to architecture, a cornerstone is traditionally the first stone laid for a structure, with all other stones laid in reference. A cornerstone marks the geographical location by orienting a building in a specific direction."

Folks Jesus is our cornerstone, our capstone, our living stone who is our reference for right living, the stone who orients us in the right direction or the way we should go! Jesus said this to the religious leaders when they questioned His authority to teach in the temple courts...

Matthew 21:42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: " 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone ; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes' ?

Matthew 21:43 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

The Kingdom will be given to those who will follow the direction of our cornerstone, Jesus, and bear the fruit that comes from living lives based on His teachings! And it is right here that we begin to unpack the purpose God has for building His family into a house of living stones and it leads us to our fifth building principle for the day...

Buildings should be built with a clear purpose in mind!

Who builds a house without a purpose? Certainly not God! God has a purpose for the Body of Christ and for you and me as a part of the Body of Christ! Peter says...

1 Peter 2:5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

This is fascinating! You and I are spiritual stones being built into a spiritual house. A house in which God dwells by way of His Holy Spirit. We talked about that last week. But what is the purpose of being a living stone? What is God's purpose for living in our hearts and in our very lives? Peter just told us our purpose is to be...

1 Peter 2:5 ... a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to be a Holy Priesthood? It means that we no longer have to go through a man to get to God. We have been made priests to serve our God. Every believer who has accepted Jesus Christ as Savior has the privilege of speaking directly to God and has been called to serve God. Maybe not as a full time or even a part time vocational minister but I want to say with as much conviction as I can muster ...

"There is no such thing as a part-time Christian, and every believer has a ministry!"

You and I are called to be living stones. We are called to be living sacrifices. We are called to be a holy priesthood, and while we no longer have to go through an earthly priest to get to God, God still uses us as His representatives, a holy priesthood, to bring people to God and teach them they can also have personal access to God. There are people you will come in contact with that I never will know. There are opportunities that you have to build relationships and to share the good news of Jesus that I'll never have. And what are those spiritual sacrifices Peter is talking about? I believe we find a partial list in Jeremiah's words to those who were trusting in an earthly temple rather than in the God of the Temple...

Jeremiah 7:1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

Jeremiah 7:2 "Stand at the gate of the LORD's house and there proclaim this message: " 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD.

Jeremiah 7:3 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place.

Jeremiah 7:4 Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!"

Jeremiah 7:5 If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly,

Jeremiah 7:6 if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm,

Jeremiah 7:7 then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave to your forefathers for ever and ever.

Did you see some of the living sacrifices we are to make? We are to sacrifice by reforming our ways and actions! We are to sacrifice by dealing with each other justly. We are not to oppress the alien, the fatherless, or the widow. We are not to shed innocent blood or follow false gods! Let me be quick to point out to you. We are not saved by our good works or our spiritual sacrifices. It is by God's grace we are saved, not as a result of our works.

"However, while we are not saved by works, we are saved "to work!"

David Platt says it this way...

"The gospel that saves us from works, saves us to work!"

Remember the verse we read last week in Ephesians?

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Just two more building principles as we finish unpacking our text. The difference between a brick and mortar house and a house of living stones is principle six:

Living stones have choices!

1 Peter 2:6 For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

1 Peter 2:7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,"

1 Peter 2:8 and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

You have a choice! You don't have to be a part of the family of God. You don't have to be a part of the spiritual house God is building. Because the building materials God is using to build His house are living, breathing human beings, He has given each of us a choice. Those who believe will never be put to shame and they come to accept Jesus as the Chief Cornerstone of their lives and He is precious to them. Those who chose not to believe and reject Him, are destined to stumble because they disobey the message of God! We've all heard John 3:16, but how many of us have considered the verses that follow John 3:16...

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

John 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

John 3:20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

John 3:21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”

Will you let God build His home in you by allowing Him to build you into a house of living stones? The choice is yours!

And as we finish our unpacking for the day, we discover one more building principle for this house of living stones...

God's House of Living Stones is Multi-purpose!

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Peter 2:10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

1 Peter 2:12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Talk about multi purpose: We are being built into a house of living stones to be...A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, for the purpose of declaring the God's praises, living such good lives among the pagans that they see our good deeds and glorify God! I said something earlier, but I'm going to say it now in a different way...In a shocking way...I'm trying to get people to stop going to church!!! Yep, you heard me right! A preacher trying to get people to stop going to church and start being the church! Kids, I still want people to come gather here at this place on Sunday mornings, okay, but I'm trying to get all the adults to understand that the church is the people not a steeple. Oh, I forgot, we don't have one of those! The church is you and me and when we come to this building we gather as the church! And if we gather as the church when we leave we scatter as the church and take our influence into every corner of our world! Folks, you are the church. If you had asked someone back in the New Testament where the church was, they would have looked at you so weird. They didn't own buildings. To them the church was a spiritual house of God's people, not a building. So I'll close with this passage the Apostle Paul wrote these words to the Corinthians...

1 Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

1 Corinthians 6:20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

Let's pray!