



1 Peter 1:4-10
Building a Spiritual House

Summary: God has set a Stone in place - you either reject Him and stumble or receive Him and discover your status and purpose.

As we turn to 1 Peter this morning, we need to remember who he is writing to: Christians living through difficulties. He says they have been grieved by what they've been through and the things they're still facing. You could understand if they felt worn out, depressed, anxious about the future, if they lacked motivation. Conflict, crisis, and stress do that to people.

But Peter encouraged them to see things differently. He reminded them of the living hope they had in Christ. They had been chosen by the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, and saved by the blood of Jesus. He reminded them that they although they felt like exiles, they were elect, they felt like pilgrims, but they were predestined. And He encouraged them to think soberly about all this and act according.

When we pick things up this morning, we find him continuing the encouragement: yes, you're going through difficult times, but God is at work and you've been given a purpose. Your life has meaning, even in difficult days because you are identified with Christ and God is stacking your life together with other Christians like stones in the wall of a new temple He's building.

Read with me and let's discover what God has for us:

1 Peter 2:4 Coming to Him *as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,* 5 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.

You see, right away, there is something happening here. You are coming to Christ and something is being done to you – you are **being built up** – you're not building yourself up – there is Another hand on you. Someone is doing something with you – making something out of you and there's a reason for it – that you may **offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ**.

But notice this isn't happening with everyone – you are coming to Jesus while others reject Him. There are people around you who do not see things the same way, don't value the same things, aren't headed the same direction in life. Some of your friends, neighbors, perhaps even your own family are not having the same experience in life – they reject the living stone that God has set in place.

That's not shocking or surprising to God though, in fact, Peter points back to the prophet Isaiah who said this would happen:

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."*

That's you.

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,"*

8 and

*"A stone of stumbling
And a rock of offense."*

They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

In a sense you could say that the whole story of Scripture is the story of God doing things and people reacting to it – either receiving what He has done or rejecting it. He created the world and everything in it and gave it to Adam and Eve to explore, develop and steward. But they chose to reject His instructions and began a rebellion against Him instead. They opted to do things their own way, go with their own thoughts and opinions on things and that has been the tone of human history ever since.

So, it should come as no surprise to us that the pattern continues. God reaches out and offers us salvation in Christ and people inspect it, consider it, and reject it because it's not quite what they're looking for; it's not part of the life they want to build, so they reject the cornerstone.

But notice, that doesn't stop what God is doing, it doesn't change His plan.

You have to see the triumphant determinism of God here! And remember, this is what Peter tells people who have gone through difficult times – people who have been grieved by their situations and circumstances: he reminds them that *God is still at work and nothing is going to stop Him.*

He *has* laid the chief cornerstone, God *has* set Jesus in place, this is happening – you can receive Him or you can reject Him, but you can't move Him. You can't replace Him. You cannot thwart the plans of God.

A cornerstone is a big deal when you're building something. It's the first stone that's set in place and it's what everything else is guided by. It sets the direction the walls will run by affecting the brick laid next to it, and it determines the rise of the next course of bricks that are laid on top of it. The shape of the entire building will be affected by where the cornerstone is placed and how it is laid.

So, God has set Jesus in place as the cornerstone of what He is doing and we have two options – we can be laid in place alongside Him, or we can reject Him and stumble over Him as something that gets in our way.

How would you describe Jesus in your life? Is He the point of reference, the point of navigation, the One you look to for guidance and direction, or is He an inconvenient nuisance that gets in the way of what you really want to do?

He is one or the other. Jesus is either precious to you, valuable to you, honored by you, or He is an offense. He either gives you direction and definition or He causes you to stumble and it all depends on who is ultimate architect of your life – are you building it on your own, or are you being built by God?

Peter has a lot to say to those who are being built, so let's dig into that now.

9 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; 10 who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

So, we continue to notice the magnificent sovereignty of God in what He has done and *is doing*. Notice, Christian, He has *called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light*. They both exist in this world, light and darkness. And once you were in darkness, but God has called you out. He does that, doesn't He? He calls for us, summons us to Himself. So now there's a difference in your life – you can see yourself and the Lord with greater clarity, with deeper and more accurate understanding.

Notice the transition, the transformation. Notice that a change happens when you surrender to the call of Christ. You were not holy, but now you are. You were not His own special people, but now you are. Once *you had not obtained mercy*, but now *you have*. God has changed you and whatever you think of your life right now and what you're going through, or what you've been through, or what you're facing, it would be different if you hadn't been changed by God, given a new identity by Him.

Twice in this passage (vs 5, 9) we're called *a royal priesthood*. It used to be that only the priests could serve in the tabernacle, and later in the Temple. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies and he could only do that once a year on the Day of Atonement to offer a sacrifice for himself and all the people. But now, Jesus has become our High Priest and given us all direct access to God the Father.

So you need to understand – it is good to have pastors, elders, and other ministry leaders, the Bible says Jesus gives them as gifts to the church to bless you, equip you, and help you grow. But we're not here to hold anything over you. And no religious leader ever should. If we go by the Bible, it says anyone in Christ is a saint and a priest. Jesus is the great leveler. You have no reason to feel inferior. If anything, you should feel an upward tug, an upward pull because this is saying you're better than you normally think of yourself – but are you acting like it?

Remember, Peter is writing to people going through difficult times – people who have been grieved by various trials, and he wants them to see their situation more accurately. He wants them to gird up the loins of their minds, to get their thinking straight because it makes a difference in how they endure their trials.

So tell me, do you think the right way? Do you really know and believe that there is no rank structure or pay chart in Christianity? Do you really know and believe that if you are in Christ, you are, right now, [a royal priest, chosen, holy, special](#)? Not because of anything you've done, not because you earned your credential or passed the qualification course, but because God has [called you out of darkness into His marvelous light](#) and is building you [up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ](#).

Do you believe that, here and now? And, if so, what difference does it make in how you see the world and your place in it? What difference does it make in how you see your home, your community, and this church?

Because notice that not only has God called you out, He has also called you in, into His family. [Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God](#). That means two things. First, you have received a relationship with God – you are now His people. But second, you is plural, you individually are brought into community corporately.

Notice that nothing here is addressed to an individual, even the letter itself is addressed to Christians scattered across a wide region in various churches who have all become [a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people](#). Those are all plural nouns, speaking of more than one person. Christian, you are part of something, and that is a major point of what God is saying.

You are, individually and independently connected to Christ. That is essential for salvation. But then you are also being formed into something that connects you with others who have had the same experience. You're being formed into a spiritual house, but one brick does not make a wall, much less an entire building – God's work brings us all together.

Today you hear a lot of buzzwords like teamwork, coalitions, communities, and stakeholders. How many of us have heard our political and military leaders say over and over again, we're never going to go to war alone, we're always going to have allies at our side. Or how many of you have heard someone talk about the need for a 'whole of

government' approach to an issue. Or maybe you're in education or healthcare, you hear the same thing about a team approach to the issue or the individual.

And if none of that rings a bell, what about the old, there's no I in team?

Except, there is. It's there in the negative space in the capital A, or you can take the m and the e and it's me, or yeah, but there's one in win.

Anyway, the point is, there's lots of talk about teamwork, allies, and working together in the world, but who is the architect drafting the design? What are the values that will guide all the separate groups? Who or what will hold people together when the coalition or team faces difficulties? What will keep them from fracturing back into self-interest or going their own ways?

For the church, the answer is: Christ. If I'm in relationship with Him, and you're in relationship with Him, you and I should be able to have some sort of connection with each other. We should be able to strengthen, reinforce, encourage, and compliment each other, even if we're different and even when we're challenged by various trials.

Think about any brick wall you've seen, or look at one of the ones around you. Have you noticed the pattern of the bricks? They're not just stacked one on top of the other, there is a pattern, an interlocking pattern, they *gain strength* by the way they're joined together *and* they *give strength* to one another as well.

Christian that should be you. God does not want you laying around as a single brick over on the side. You're supposed to be connected to other Christians built up by them and building them up – as you equip each other, steady each other, and supply each other. God has made you for interdependency and interconnection. Christianity *is* community.

But it's community in Christ. We have something to share with each other because we're each connected to Jesus directly. Do you see it that way? Do you realize that every person who is in Christ has the ability to reflect Christ to you? And that you have the obligation and opportunity to reflect Christ to them? Do you realize we're being built up together – living stones stacked upon each other by the hand of God!

Think about what this has to mean, not only in the church, but in your home. Do you minister to one another at home? Is that a real concept for you? Is that a valid way of thinking? I'm not just talking about living together. I'm not just talking about doing life together. I'm not even talking about merely loving each other. I'm asking the question: *do you minister to one another?*

Is there ever a supernatural aspect to your family interactions? Have you ever prayed, God help me *minister* to my spouse, my kids, or my parents as a royal priest?

And, then, yes, of course, here in the church and in the community, at work, in your neighborhood. Do you look for people to minister to since you're part of God's special

people? And, do you believe that other people can minister to you since you're being built up together? Not just the pastors, not just the ministry leaders, but anyone connected to Christ can minister to you. Anyone.

I pray regularly, consistently, for our students especially to be ministers, counselors, comforters, and sources of encouragement to their peers, that the fruit of the Spirit would be evident in their lives because I don't see an age qualification anywhere here in Scripture. If you are born again, all of this applies to you. You are [a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people](#).

Christianity is community – with God and with each other no matter your age, sex, or marital status, or whether you have kids or not, no matter where you grew up or where you call home, or how long you're here in DC – we are all in Christ, together.

So *be* together - hang out after the service, take the awkward step of walking up and saying hello to someone, ask them out to lunch or have them over for dinner, go hiking or meet up at a playground but get to know each other. If you can, join the next Bible Study after Easter, come to the next event, or sign up to serve in a ministry, that's always one of the best ways to meet others in the church.

Then, as you get to know people, be open and get real. Ask how you can pray for them; tell them how they can pray for you – be on the look out for good things you might be able to do for or with each other because God wants us to connect with each other. We're not great at it. You'll be disappointed or frustrated at times, it will be awkward at times, it won't always be the best fit, but you've got to keep trying, you've GOT to keep prioritizing connections in the body of Christ, even if you're only here for six months. Keep pressing in, keep meeting new people, this is an essential part of the body of Christ, it's what God is doing by stacking us all together – building us into a [spiritual house](#).

So, we see God is doing something – He's laid a cornerstone in place, and we either stumble over it or we're stacked up on it – we are transformed by God. But notice, there's a reason for all of this, a point and purpose behind it:

[1 Peter 2:5](#) you... are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[1 Peter 2:9](#) ... 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;**

So, what are spiritual sacrifices and what should this praise look like?

Let's look at sacrifices first. Before Jesus came, priests were responsible for inspecting animals and items that were brought to the tabernacle or Temple and then participating in the offering. But, you have to remember, that sacrifices were never meant to be purely transactional – it wasn't just a way of paying a bill to God. It was a way of saying I messed

up or I need help or I want to say thank you, and then using the sacrifice or offering as a way of expressing that – if your heart wasn't in it, then God never really wanted what was in your hands.

And that's still true today – God provided Himself an offering in Jesus, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, but He still wants your heart. And so we read in

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a **living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service*. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Your life is meant to be a living sacrifice – a wonderful contradiction of terms, because sacrifices usually die, but you are called to live! To live for God, as a sacrifice! Your whole life is meant to be consecrated to Him. And that all makes sense if you're a **chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people** doesn't it? God has redeemed you entirely, so He wants you entirely.

If there were any part of your life that God hadn't redeemed in Christ, then I imagine it would be possible to leave that part outside the domain of His influence and involvement, but since He has redeemed you entirely, then shouldn't your whole life be sacrificed to Him? Shouldn't your body be a **living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God**? Isn't that **reasonable**?

It's not just our bodies though, it's the stuff we earn with our bodies too – all that we are and all that we have. Our church supports missionaries around the world and here in our own community as well. The Church in Philippi, that's a town in Greece, did the same thing for the apostle Paul – they sent him regular financial gifts to enable him to serve and he thanked them for it in one of his letters, he said:

Phil 4:18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, **an acceptable sacrifice**, well pleasing to God.

When you take something you have received or earned, and you give it away in the name of Jesus, it becomes a **sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God**. So think about this, because it means you can worship God by giving, or doing things for others.

Let's look at one other passage together. The book of Hebrews specifically points out the way Jesus was offered up as a sacrifice for us. In Chapter 13 it says:

Hebrews 13:12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. 13 Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

and

15 ... by Him let us continually offer **the sacrifice of praise** to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. 16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with **such sacrifices** God is well pleased.

So, there's that giving piece again – that God is well pleased when we give in His name and help others, but notice as well the value of thanksgiving and praise, **the fruit of *our* lips** – the words that come out of our mouths. Remember, Peter says we have become a royal priesthood **that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light**.

My friends, it is your purpose in life to praise God and give Him thanks, and that has two surprising effects. First of all, it helps us cultivate an attitude of gratitude, and you can find all kinds of evidence of the value of that. A quick search on the Internet will give you thousands of voices from all kinds of backgrounds championing the cause of gratitude.

The problem isn't with having something to say, it's with stopping long enough to shift your focus from the fire in front of you to all the other things in your life that are a blessing.

And, if and when you do that, your actions and attitudes become a witness to others around you. When you continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, and give thanks to His name, it gets the attention of people around you.

I remember listening to someone give his testimony recently, and he spoke of coming to youth group and playing games and singing crazy songs, but then they would shift to real praise and worship songs, and this guy watched as the friend who brought him would close his eyes and sing and the guy giving his testimony said – “he went to a place I couldn't go, he was connecting with something I couldn't see.” And he would try, he'd try singing the songs like his friend, he would try singing the words, but it didn't work for him because it wasn't real yet, he hadn't given his life to Christ. He watched his friend make a sacrifice of praise, and it got his attention.

Church, it's the same with us. When you worship, really, truly worship, it's a witness to people around you. It's an encouragement to those who know Christ, and it's a curiosity to those who don't, but either way, people notice when you're serving as a priest, responding to the truth of who God is and what He has done for you.

Which brings us right back to where we started – God is at work, He has laid a stone in place, and we're either stumbling over it, or being built up on it. Which one is true for you? God offers you mercy. He calls you out of darkness into the light. He wants to convert you, transform you, and build you up as living stones, to make you something you were not without Him - **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**. So let's pray and then do that now.