
Spiritual Formation Part 20

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The Foundation of our Christian Faith Part 3

Is Christ Your Church's Living Stone?

1 Kings 5:1 to 9:9; 2 Chronicles 3:3 to 5:1; 6:1-7:22; Psalm 118:18-27; 127:1; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-10

The idea is that the cornerstone represents Christ as the Chosen Stone (Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:6-8). The idea that Jesus Christ is our *Living Stone* has significant ramifications of His Lordship over our lives and church. These themes refer to Him as our temple, the One who gives us grace, reconciliation, empowerment, and comfort, and He does not disappoint. Living stone means the foundation, the source of something, such as of a building or a family (Psalm 118:22; Isa. 8:14; 28:16; 2 Peter 2:4-10). This means Jesus is the Spiritual Temple, not just in theory or in liturgy, but in actual practice, living in our day-to-day leadership and management. He is the place and focus of worship and counsel. The church or temple is no longer a building; it is a community in relationship to Christ. Think of these images from the reality that Jesus was a carpenter in His human occupation, and perhaps frequently worked with stonemasons or did masonry himself. He was personally familiar with building both in practice and in Lordship, and we must submit to His Lordship in order to be a healthy, vibrant church. Make no mistake. This image from the Gospels is not a mere tale or metaphor; He is to be Christ the Stone, our Giver of life, our Source and Foundation. We must manage His Church from the mindset and practice that He is our LORD for all we are and do (Matt. 21:42; John 1:4; 1 Cor. 3:1-3; 15:45)!

Living stones in 2 Peter 2:5 is plural, denoting that they are the people of the Church. In the context of our spiritual house, it means a living organism, a sacred temple empowered by God to worship God. This idea implies that our union in Him is our dependence on Christ, as He is the One who supports us, lifts us up, and houses us in His presence (Ex. 19:6; Mark 12:10-11). This should cause us to think and be in the wonders and fears of "awe!" This means Christian community and fellowship is a "spiritual house," established, organized, and led in Him. We are all one in Christ and we derive our life from Him. Our identity in Him must affect us personally and publicly, synergizing us as a community so our church is managed in His "reckoning" (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 15:45) that is formed, indwelt, and empowered by the Spirit (Acts 2:33). We are all precious, important, and have a job to do as a moving, living temple, reflecting His love and holiness (John 2:19; Ro 12:1; 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:19-22; Heb 7:26; 10:10).

The fact of what our Lord has done for us shows us that we are to be as a corporate collaboration of people in Him. Our Spiritual Formation is our response to who He is and what He did in His Person and Work. The call is to come to Christ because

He is the Living Stone, as He called in Matthew 11:28-30. This is an image of how our Lord is our direction and foundation in all we do, personally and in church, and how we, as a church, should function, as we are all interlocked and plumbed with purpose to one another by our calls, gifts, and abilities—all in Him (Eph. 4). Christ is constructing a building of faith and eminence to be His Church, made up of the stones of “us” lain upon the foundation of Him. Thus, our faith needs to grow from us personally and then move into our community so we can interlock with one another, fastened by the mortar of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

In Second Peter 2, Peter tells of the incredible transition from the Temple and the priesthood to the Church—foretold, but still inconceivable to the Jewish mindset. The actuality is that Christ is our stone bridge. He gives us continuity and purpose. Jesus is the Foundation, Pillar, and the Purpose of the Church, which means our church, even your church. To facilitate worship, we as His people as gathered are the Church no matter when and where we are at. We are not cold stones that are stationary and that decay; rather, we are living and movable, cemented together as a corporate identity in Him.

Yet, as perfect and precious as our Living Stone is, we, the people leading His Church, tend not to want to understand Him and therefore refuse to follow His principles out of fear of losing people, not being culturally relevant, or perhaps a fear of conviction, too. His way gets in the way of their way (my way) of leadership, because they have a skewed understanding of the Cornerstone as LORD. This idea is much like that of the first century Jews who wanted a warrior Messiah, not a Savior and One who convicted their souls. However, when we are in Him, we have no need to fear a loss of relevancy because we more than make up for it with authenticity, which is far more contagious for the faith to those who do not yet know Him. Authenticity means we are encountering and becoming close to Him. Christ alone gives us the comfort, protection, and the deep love we need. Therefore, we can lead His way and not compromise or lose our footing when we are on His footer. Keep in mind that we, too, are precious in God’s sight!

Our identification as a “corporate” church does not imply a building; rather, it is a relationship of community where we are His priests! Each person’s Spiritual Formation is in synergy with one another (Just look up One another in a concordance). The entire sacrificial and priestly system, as God directed Moses to set up, is now obsolete. It has been replaced. Its purpose was to point to Christ and get people ready; now, He is here. He is the Sacrifice, the Altar, and the Temple, and we are the priests (Ex. 19:1-9; Eph. 2:17-18; Heb. 7:27; 8:6; 9:12-28; 10:12-19; 13:15-16; Rev. 1:6). The key is that we have to listen to His Word; we must relinquish our self-absorbed mindsets and focus on Christ as Lord over all. We are called a *Spiritual House* referring to the O.T. Temple as God’s dwelling place. Now, that house is more than a building; it is also a legacy, a large family, or a dynasty such as the “House of Israel.” Thus, the Church is God’s dwelling place and legacy (2 Sam. 7:5-7, 12-16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22; Heb. 3:6).

Questions

1. If you had to build your own house, what materials would you use and what would you hope it would look like? What if you could “rebuild” your church (building and/or people); what would it look like?
2. Have you ever thought of the church as a corporate collaboration of people in Him? How so? Why not?
3. The Church is made up of stones of “us” laid upon the Foundation of Him. So, how is your church a reflection of this passage? How is your church a building of faith? How could your church be a better building of faith? What could your role be?
4. How is the faith of some Christians like “cold stones” that are stationary and that decay? What causes this? How can you guard yourself from this mindset?
5. Why does your faith need to grow in you personally before it can move into your community? What would it mean for you to have a faith that is a “living stone?”
6. How do we reject Jesus with our behaviors, attitudes, feelings...?
7. What does it mean to you that you are acceptable to God, deeply loved, and complete in Him? How can this mindset enhance who and how you are?
8. How do you feel that you are a priest, a representative of Christ? What can you do more with this call?
9. How can your faith and conviction be strengthened by knowing deeply that wherever you go, you are still under His shelter and care—no matter where you are or what you face?
10. How is Christ the Foundation of your church? What needs to take place so that people will fully realize this? What would your church look like if people did?
11. What can your church do to be more like this passage? For example, how can each person interlock with one another, fastened by the mortar of the Holy Spirit in a healthier way?
12. What would your life look like if this were so? What needs to be done to make this so?