

Message Three

Life and Building in Peter's Epistles

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 1:8; 2:1-5, 9; 2 Pet. 1:3-4

I. The central thought of Peter's Epistles and of the entire Scripture is life and building—1 Pet. 1:23; 2:2-5; 2 Pet. 1:3-4:

- A. Life is the Triune God embodied in Christ and realized as the Spirit dispensing Himself into us for our enjoyment, and building is the church, the Body of Christ, God's spiritual house, as the enlargement and expansion of God for the corporate expression of God—Gen. 2:8-9, 22; Matt. 16:18; Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:16.
- B. Christ as the seed of life is the power of life within us that has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness for the building up of the church as the rich surplus of life and the expression of life through the growth and development of life—2 Pet. 1:3-4; cf. Acts 3:15; *Hymns*, #203, stanza 4.

II. God's goal is to have a spiritual house built up with living stones—1 Pet. 2:5:

- A. As life to us, Christ is the incorruptible seed; for God's building, He is the living stone—1:23; 2:4.
- B. At Peter's conversion the Lord gave him a new name, Peter—a stone (John 1:42); when Peter received the revelation concerning Christ, the Lord revealed further that He was the rock—a stone (Matt. 16:18); by these two incidents Peter received the impression that both Christ and His believers are living stones for God's building (1 Pet. 2:4-8; Acts 4:20; Isa. 28:16; Zech. 4:7).
- C. We, the believers in Christ, are living stones as the duplication of Christ through regeneration and transformation; we were created of clay (Rom. 9:21), but at regeneration we received the seed of the divine life, which by its growing in us transforms us into living stones (1 Pet. 2:5).

III. Since God's building is living, it is growing; the actual building up of the church as the house of God is by the believers' growth in life—Eph. 2:21:

- A. In order to grow in life for God's building, we must love the Lord, take heed to our spirit, and guard our heart with all vigilance to stay on the pathway of life—1 Pet. 1:8; 2:2, 5; 3:4, 15; Prov. 4:18-23; Deut. 10:12; Mark 12:30.
- B. If we want Christ's life to be unhindered in us, we must experience the breaking of the cross, the killing death of Christ in the all-inclusive Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of glory, so that the following obstacles within us can be dealt with and removed—1 Pet. 1:11; 4:14; Psalms 139:23-24:
 - 1. Being a Christian means not taking anything other than Christ as our aim; the obstacle to this is not knowing the pathway of life and not taking Christ as our life—Matt. 7:13-14; Phil. 3:8-14; Col. 3:4; Rom. 8:28-29.
 - 2. The second obstacle is hypocrisy; a person's spirituality is not determined by outward appearance but by how he takes care of Christ—Matt. 6:1-6; 15:7-8; John 5:44; 12:42-43; cf. Josh. 7:21.
 - 3. The third obstacle is rebellion; we may be very active and zealous in doing things but still imprison and disobey the living Christ within us by ignoring Him—Lev. 14:9, 14-18; 11:1-2, 46-47; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 15:33.
 - 4. The fourth obstacle is our natural capabilities; if these natural capabilities remain unbroken in us, they will become a problem to Christ's life—2:14-15; 3:12, 16-17; Jude 19; cf. Lev. 10:1-2.

- C. In order to grow in life for God's building, we must put away "all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envyings and all evil speakings"—1 Pet. 2:1.
- D. In order to grow in life for God's building, we must be nourished with the guileless milk of God's word—v. 2:
 - 1. The guileless milk is conveyed in the word of God to nourish our inner man through the understanding of our rational mind and is assimilated by our mental faculties—Rom. 8:6; cf. Deut. 11:18.
 - 2. Although the nourishing milk of the word is for the soul through the mind, it eventually nourishes the spirit, making us not soulish but spiritual, suitable for being built up as a spiritual house of God—cf. 1 Cor. 2:15.
 - 3. In order to enjoy the milk of the word, to taste God with His goodness in the word, we must receive His word by means of all prayer and muse on His word—1 Pet. 2:3; Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 99, 148:
 - a. To muse on the word is to taste and enjoy it through careful considering—1 Pet. 2:2-3; Psa. 119:103.
 - b. Prayer, speaking to oneself, and praising the Lord may also be included in musing on the word; to muse on the word is to "chew the cud," to receive the word of God through much reconsideration—Lev. 11:3.
 - 4. By feeding on Christ as the nourishing milk in the word, we grow unto full salvation, unto maturity through transformation for glorification; salvation in 1 Peter 2:2 is a matter of transformation for God's building.
 - 5. We enjoy the "milk-Christ" to nourish us so that we may be transformed with Him as the "stone-Christ" and be built up as the "Body-Christ," as God's spiritual house into a holy priesthood—vv. 2-4; 1 Cor. 12:12-13.

IV. The holy priesthood, the coordinated body of priests, is the built-up spiritual house; God wants a spiritual house for His dwelling and a priestly body, a corporate priesthood, for His service—1 Pet. 2:5; Exo. 19:5-6:

- A. We are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession" (1 Pet. 2:9)—*chosen race* denotes our descent from God; *royal priesthood*, our service to God; *holy nation*, our being a community for God; and *people acquired for a possession*, our preciousness to God.
- B. Our corporate priestly service is to tell out as the gospel the virtues of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (v. 9) so that we may "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (v. 5b); these spiritual sacrifices are:
 - 1. Christ as the reality of all the sacrifices of the Old Testament types, such as the burnt offering, meal offering, peace offering, sin offering, and trespass offering—Lev. 1—5.
 - 2. The sinners saved by our gospel preaching, offered as members of Christ—Rom. 15:16.
 - 3. Our body, our praises, and the things we do for God—12:1; Heb. 13:15-16; Phil. 4:18.
- C. All our priestly service to the Lord must originate from Him as "the God of measure" and not from ourselves; all our priestly service must be according to His leading and His limitation, as we allow His death to operate in us, so that His resurrection life can be imparted through us into others—2 Cor. 10:13; John 12:24; 21:15-22; 2 Sam. 7:18, 25, 27; Luke 1:37-38; *Hymns*, #907.