

That is our nature. But when we come to the Lord Jesus, He will transform us from dust to stone. He will put a new life into us.

A new nature into us. To develop a new character. Because our Lord Himself is a stone.

You remember in 1 Peter chapter 2, our Lord Himself is a living stone. Rejected by man. But precious, chosen by God.

Now as we confess Him as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, that faith, that confession, that revelation, transform us from dust into stone. We receive the same life from our Lord Himself. We begin to have His same nature so that we can be transformed and conformed to His own image.

So brothers and sisters, we thank God that by the revelation of the Father and our confession of the Lord Jesus, we are all become stones, living stones. On this rock, our Lord said, I will build my church. And Hades' gates shall not prevail against it.

Here you'll find our Lord Jesus. He said, I will build my church. But He will build it upon a rock.

We know a rock means a massive stone. On this massive rock, the Lord will build His church with many living stones. The rock is the foundation of the house of God.

And all these little stones are the materials for the building of the house of God. Now of course, the rock refers to our Lord Himself. The rock refers to the confession of our Lord Jesus.

That He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. The rock refers to His person and to His work. He is the foundation of the house of God.

You remember the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. He said, He is like a master builder. Actually, the Chinese people in Chinese is better. He is a foreman.

He is not a master builder. He is a foreman. And He laid the foundation of the house of God.

And He said, there is no other foundation that anyone can lay but the Lord Jesus Himself. So our Lord is the foundation of the church. He is the rock.

And on this rock, our Lord will build His church. Thank God, Peter understood it very well. Even though we find in this world many who had misunderstood.

Some say that the church is built upon Peter. He is the rock. Now if that's the case, you'll find before the building begins, the foundation has already shaken.

Because you remember when our Lord began to reveal to His disciples that He will go to Jerusalem. He will suffer. He will die.

But on the third day, He will be raised from the dead. And you know what Peter did? Out of his good heart, he laid hold of the Lord. He shook the Lord a little bit and said, Lord, forbid it.

You should never go to the cross. And our Lord turned around and Satan, get behind you. Because you're mindful of man and not mindful of God.

Peter could not be the foundation. Our Lord Himself is the foundation. And thank God, Peter understood it well.

Because in 1 Peter 2, he said, as we come to the Lord, as we come to the living stone, we all become living stone. And then we are being built up together into a spiritual house. Peter himself will be built into the house.

And all of us who are living stones will be built into that house. And our Lord Jesus said, I will build my church. Our Lord Jesus said, I will build my church.

Who is the builder? Who is the master builder? None other but the Lord Himself. You know, the house of God is so heavenly, spiritual and glorious. It is to be the habitation of God in the Spirit.

It is to be the resting place of God. And it is also to be our eternal home. If you realize what a house this will be.

Now, who will be the builder? Truly, there is only one who is able to build such a spiritual house. And the Lord said, I will build the church. He is the architect.

He is the engineer. He is the builder. Brothers and sisters, today we hear people say, we are church planters.

And we are going to the world to plant the churches. But dear brothers and sisters, remember, unless the Lord build the house, the builders labor in vain. That is Psalm 127, verse 1. We may be able to build many, many other houses.

We may be able to build even palaces. We may be able to build great empire. But the Lord alone can build that spiritual house.

Unless He builds the house, the builders labor in vain. So this should be a warning to us. And the Lord said, I will build my church.

This house is the church. Because it is the call of ones gathered together. Where two or three are gathered together unto my name.

The Lord said, there am I in the midst of them. With the presence of the Lord, among His own people. With the people gathered together unto His name.

That is, put ourselves under His authority. You have His church. The church belongs to Him.

It comes out of Him. And it goes back to Him. So, brothers and sisters, sometimes we hear to say, this is my church.

This is my church that I am responsible for. But let us be warned. The church belongs to the Lord alone.

And if it is His own work, then the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. As we look into Christianity today, it seems as if Hades' gates have prevailed against it. Why? Because this is man's work.

It is not the work of our Lord Himself. We thank God in one sense. That we find the so-called churches today are being shaken.

That the unshakable may remain. So here you find our Lord Jesus for the first time mentioned the word church. Our Lord came into this world for this very purpose.

When we read the gospel according to Luke, we may get the impression that the reason why our Lord came into this earth is to seek to save the lost. Truly, that's what He did. We are the lost.

And our Lord came to this earth. He came to seek us. And He came to save us.

So the gospel according to Luke is the gospel of the forgiveness of our sins. The remission of our sins. The dear brothers and sisters, of the four gospels, only the gospel according to John give us the deep meaning of the coming of the Lord.

Because John always goes back to the beginning. He always goes to the depths. Our Lord does come to save the lost.

That is very true. But that is the beginning. That is not the end.

Our Lord comes into the world. According to the gospel, according to John, He came as a bridegroom. He came to seek for His bride.

But when He came to this earth, He could not find His bride. So He had to make His bride. He has to call people out of the world.

And gather them unto Himself. In other words, He has to build His wife. That is the reason of His coming.

Because the house, the church, is His wife. Today it is the body, His body. One day it will be His bride.

When this body is fully grown. So the real reason for His coming is to build the church. That is His motive.

So we can see how important this is concerning the building of the house of God. We would like to go back to the Old Testament. As our brother mentioned last night, the Old Testament gave us pictures.

The New Testament gave us the Word. We have the Word. But we need to go back to the picture.

Because the picture will give us more details. And with visual aid, it will help us to understand deeper. It is true, the Old Testament is shadow.

But on the other hand, it is picture. It is easier for us to understand. So how does the Lord build His church? We go back to the Old Testament pictures and learn some principles about it.

You know when God called the children of Israel out of Egypt, He brought them to Himself, to Mount Sinai. We already mentioned that He gave them the Law so that they may be sanctified. And then God began to reveal His mind to the people.

He said, Make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among you. Here you find God does not give them a sanctuary. God said, Build Me a sanctuary.

But how are they going to build it? First of all, in Exodus chapter 25, God said, Let the people bring heave offering unto Me. All whose hearts have prompted Him, let them bring Me a love offering. Gold, silver, brass, and wood, and all these materials.

Brothers and sisters, you remember the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt. They were slaves for hundreds of years. Now, a slave owns nothing.

A slave does not even own his own life. So, as slaves in Egypt, they were destitute. They have nothing that they can claim as their own.

So, where came all these gold and silver and precious stones? Now, you remember, when God sent Moses to Egypt, He told Moses, I will deliver My people out of Egypt. And, when I'm doing that, all the children of Israel will ask of their neighbors. Egyptians.

For gold, silver, and all these things. So, when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they asked their neighbors for all these precious things. And the Bible said, they're actually deprived of Egypt, of all Israel.

Now, in a sense, God is righteous. Because they have been slave laborers for hundreds of years. Without any wages.

So, God not only delivered them, but gave them all the wages of the past. When God delivers a people, His deliverance is so complete. Not only men, but also women and children.

You remember Pharaoh said, let the men go, but let the children stay behind. Pharaoh said, let the men go, but let the children stay behind. But no.

All will go. Not only men and women and children, whole families, even all the cattle and the sheep. Not only all the cattle and the sheep, but all the wealth of Egypt.

When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they were a wealthy people. All given to them by God. And now God said, give me a love offering.

Whoever's heart have prompted Him. Brothers and sisters, this is the way of God. He gave us everything.

And when He asked for a love offering, He said, if your heart prompts you. If you want to hold back as your own. Thinking that you are the owner, the possessors of it.

Even though they do not belong to you. They are given to you by God. But if you want to hold it back for your own.

God said, you can do it. But it's to your own heart. God wants a willing sacrifice.

Out of the abundance of His grace. He asks us to give Him back something. Brothers and sisters, this is the way of God.

And then when you come to the building of the temple. You remember David wanted to build God a temple. He was not allowed to do it.

And yet David prepared all the materials for the house of God. In 1 Chronicles chapter 22, verse 14. He said, David said, in all my affliction, I have prepared abundance of material for the building of the house of God.

In other words, in all the wars that David engaged in. He separated the spoils for God. And also in 1 Chronicles chapter 29.

And here you'll find in verses 2 and 3. 1 Chronicles chapter 29 verses 2 and 3. He said, and I have prepared according to all my power for the house of my God. According to all my power. And verse 3. And moreover in my affections for the house of my God, I have given of my own property of gold and silver for the house of my God over and above all that I have prepared for the house of the sanctuary.

Out of his affliction. Out of his affliction. According to all my power.

Out of my affections for the house of God. He gave the best to God. Brothers and sisters, this is how the house of God is built.

Now, if this is true in the Old Testament time, now, how much more true it should be with the reality. Brothers and sisters, that's the reason why you'll find in Romans chapter 12. Therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, I beseech you to present your bodies a living sacrifice.

Totally acceptable to God, it is your reasonable service. In Romans, you'll find from chapter 1 to chapter 11, tells us of the manifold mercies of God. How He saves us from death.

How He delivers us from our sins. Forgives our sins. Delivers from the power of sin.

Gives us His Holy Spirit. Not only justifies us, but sanctifies us. And glorifies us.

You know, brothers and sisters, when you read Romans 1 to 11, you'll see all the compassions of God. How He graces us with many graces. Now, what should be our response? Therefore, brethren, present your bodies a living sacrifice.

Our love offering is not gold and silver. Because we are not building a physical building. Our love offering is ourselves.

This body that has been redeemed by a great price. We do not belong to ourselves. We are bought with a price.

We are not our own. We have no right to live for ourselves. We belong to Him.

And yet, God will force us. If we want to live our own lives with all that He has given us, like the prodigal son, we could do that. He will not force us.

But what a loss! Loss to the father and loss to the son. By His love, He beseeches us. By His Spirit, He prompts us.

He wants us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. And this living sacrifice is the material for the building of the house of God. How can our Lord Jesus build us into a spiritual house? To be saved alone is not enough.

We have to consecrate our lives to Him. We have to give our right, as it were, to Him. Actually, we have no right to Him.

Our right belongs to Him. And yet, in another sense, He wants to give up what we consider as our right back to Him. So that He can work in us and with us.

The reason why the house of God is not built. Why is it so delayed? It is because those who are redeemed hold themselves back. They hold themselves back.

They do not give themselves completely as burnt offering to God. So we say consecration is the beginning of our Christian experience. The Lord cannot do anything with you until you present your body as a living sacrifice.

Then you'll find the Lord will begin to work to build His house. And then, of course, you'll find in the Old Testament you'll find in the Old Testament after the Lord called them to bring in the love offering. Then He called certain people to come and work with this material.

In the case of the building of the tabernacle, you'll find in chapter thirty-five of Exodus and the beginning of thirty-six, God called Basilio and Aholiot these two men. God called Basilio and Aholiot these two men. These two men are filled with the Spirit.

God gave them wisdom and understanding. God gave them skill to work with all these various materials. And together with them all those people who have wise and understanding heart and all those who are moved to come and work.

So you'll find these people they come together to work with the material. Of course. All under the direction of Moses.

And then again you'll find when you go to the building of the temple, the same thing. Solomon is the man of wisdom. And you'll find that he gathered tens of thousands of people to come and build the temple.

Brothers and sisters, when you come to the reality, the building of the church, of the house of God, you'll find that the master builder is our Lord Himself. But He does not build all by Himself. He called us to come and work under Him and with Him.

He gave us wisdom and understanding not according to our human wisdom and human knowledge. On our natural ability. But He gave us spiritual gifts.

He gave us spiritual grace. And with all these we are able to work under Him. And that is the reason why you'll find in Ephesians chapter four that after our Lord ascended up on high, He gave gifts to man.

He called some apostles, some prophets, some shepherds and teachers, and some evangelists for the perfecting of the saints. These ministers of the Word of God, they are the gifts of God to His church because the church is built with the Word of God. But their work is to perfect the saints.

They are not the ones who build the church. They are building directly. They are building indirectly.

Their work is to perfect the saints in two ways. One is to mature the spiritual life of the saints because the Word of God will nurture us. On the other hand, to equip the saints to help the saints to develop their gifts.

And then the whole body will minister one to another. It is the body ministry. All the members of the body, all are gifted in one or other way by the Holy Spirit.

All who have received grace from God, we function together. We work together. And as we work together, in the Bible it says, Ephesians 4, 16, it shows the self-building up in love.

We love one another. We encourage one another. We supply one another.

Brothers and sisters, through such fellowshiping, the church is built. Then thirdly, you find also all these materials that are to be built into the house. Lots of work has to be done to these materials.

You do not just take the raw materials and then just display them. You have to make them furniture. So you find there is lots of beating in the Old Testament tabernacle.

The gold has to be beat and beat and beat into form, beautiful form of the golden tabernacle. So lots of work has to be done upon the material. The same thing is true with the temple.

These massive stones, they have to cut from the quarry. And in the quarry they are to be chiseled according to measure and to be smooth. And every stone is given a number so that these stones when they are transported to Mount Moriah, they can just fit one to another.

The Bible said during the building of the temple there is no sound of iron. No sound of hammer. Because everything was done in the quarry.

Done in darkness. Lots of work has to be done. When you come to the building of the house of God today, are you surprised that the Holy Spirit has to do lots of work to your life? There's lots of cutting to be done.

Lots of chiseling, lots of smoothing. Lots of reducing. Lots of the work of the Holy Spirit by using the cross upon our life.

Without the cross there can be no church. Not only individually we have to bear the cross. Because to fit us with our brothers and sisters there is much cross to be borne.

The Lord is not building a monument. The Lord is building a house. So you'll find that's the reason why there's lots of work to be done.

But thank God if everything is done according to pattern, when it is finished, the glory of the Lord will fill the house. Brothers and sisters, it takes less than a year to build a tabernacle. It takes seven years to build a temple.

It takes probably around four years to build a second temple. And of course, King Herod enlarged it for forty-six years. But how many years is the house of God built? For two thousand years already our Lord is still building His house.

Can you find any house on the earth that takes so long? What does it tell you? It tells you on the one hand it is a house that God built. It is no man's work. It will be a glorious church.

It will be an eternal home. That's why it takes so long. But on the other hand, does it say anything to us? We have delayed and delayed the finishing of that house.

How anxious our Lord must be to enter into His rest. How anxious He wants us to enter into rest. But we do not understand.

Our heart is not one with Him. We do not cooperate. We do not yield to Him.

He is the master builder. How skillful is His hand. He can turn these base materials into noble vessels.

If only we will put ourselves completely in His hands. So our prayer is, Lord, hasten this work. Begin it with me.

That our Lord may enter into His rest. We will not give ourselves to rest. Until the Lord can rest among His people.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for these days. We thank Thee for the fellowship of the saints.

We thank Thee for giving us Thy Word. And we thank Thee for all that Thou has bestowed upon us. Dear Lord, we pray that all these will not be in vain.

By the working of Thy Holy Spirit, pray that Thou will turn it into value. Eternal value to Thyself. Bless all Thy people.

Wherever we go, may Thy work continue until that glorious church without spot or wrinkle may be ready for Thy Beloved Son. We ask in Thy precious name. Before we depart, I believe I can represent all the brothers and sisters from abroad.

We are very thankful for the brethren in Singapore. We thank You for Your love. We thank You for the labor of Your love.

May the Lord bless you.

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