

2/10-16 #3 Life and Building in Peter's Epistles

CP1: I. The central thought of Peter's Epistles and of the entire Scripture is life and building. **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. **II.** God's goal is to have a spiritual house built up with living stones.

1 Peter 2:4 Coming to Him, a living stone, rejected by men but with God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **A** As life to us, Christ is the incorruptible seed; for God's building, He is the living stone. **B** At Peter's conversion the Lord gave him a new name, Peter—a stone; when Peter received the revelation concerning Christ, the Lord revealed further that He was the rock—a stone; by these two incidents Peter received the impression that both Christ and His believers are living stones for God's building. **C** We, the believers in Christ, are living stones as the duplication of Christ through regeneration and transformation; we were created of clay, but at regeneration we received the seed of the divine life, which by its growing in us transforms us into living stones. After receiving Him as the seed of life, we need to grow that we may experience Him as the stone living in us. *Thus He will make us also living stones, transformed with His stone nature, that we may be built together with others as a spiritual house upon Him as both the foundation and the cornerstone.*

CP2: III. **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. Prov. 4:23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it are the issues of life. **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** 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. **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 But take care not to do your righteousness before

men in order to be gazed at by them; otherwise, you have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens. *A smooth stone does not have any sharp edges or protrusions. Some people are born this way; they never offend their siblings and parents at home, and they never offend their co-workers and superiors at work. Regardless of how people treat them, they are always smooth and even. When such a person is saved, he becomes a smooth Christian in the church... Many brothers and sisters praise him, saying, "This person is truly spiritual. He never argues at home or causes trouble outside. We see him doing many things, but he never gives his opinion. He is truly spiritual and full of life." ... We need to realize that this is actually hypocrisy. If his behavior were truly spiritual, then it would mean that he was spiritual even before he was saved. This is not possible. A person's spirituality is not determined by outward appearance but by how he takes care of Christ.* **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. **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. 1 Cor. 2:14 But a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him... 15 But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one. *Many brothers and sisters truly love the Lord, are zealous for the Lord, and are very godly. Nevertheless, their greatest problem is the strength and greatness of their capabilities and abilities. Consequently, Christ has no ground or way in them. ... There is one solution to all these obstacles in us—we must pass through the cross and let the cross break us. ... This will allow Christ's life to be lived out from us.* **Testimony** I testify that the good side of natural life is a hindrance to the growth of life because it is hypocritical and not Christ. In the early days of my salvation, I had my own law, and I used to condemn brothers and sisters who did not practice it in my heart. For example, I despised in my heart those who made noise while eating. I was very tired because I had a church life with these rules of my own. At that time, when I observed leading brothers and sisters, they did not pay attention to these details. I called upon the name of the Lord and trained myself to crucify my self-made law. Without this experience, I would have been exhausted and would not have been able to continue to live in the Brother's House

and have a church life.

I also had the problem of natural affection coming out of my heart when nourishing new ones in my church life in Kobe. At first, I did not realize that this affection did not have Christ as its life and was hypocritical. That affection was accompanied by some impatience and anxiety. The Bible clearly says "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6), "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." (John 6:63), "But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble," (1 Corinthians 3:12) **FN** Wood, grass, and stubble signify the knowledge, realization, and attainments that come from the believers' natural background (such as Judaism or other religions, philosophy, or culture) and the natural way of living (which is mainly in the soul and is the natural life). Wood, in contrast to gold, signifies the nature of the natural man; grass, in contrast to silver, signifies the fallen man, the man of the flesh, who has not been redeemed or regenerated by Christ; and stubble, in contrast to precious stones, signifies the work and living that issue from an earthen source and have not been transformed by the Holy Spirit. All these worthless materials are the product of the believers' natural man together with what they have collected from their background. In God's economy these materials are fit only to be burned.

As a result of my ministering to people with natural affection that comes from the flesh, the Lord did not grow in that person, but only the flesh developed in response. Through many failures and revelation from the Bible, I began to see that shepherding that comes from natural affection not only does not help to build up the Body, but also destroys it. Then, little by little, I began to learn and continue to learn in my church life not to act culturally or politically. And when I should speak honestly, I learn to speak honestly and straightforward in the Lord, and when I should not speak, I learn not to speak in the Lord, and to pray and give it to the Lord.

CP3: 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. 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. 2Cor.4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you. 10:13 But we will not boast beyond our measure but according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us, to reach even as far as you. **FN** The apostle was bold, but not without limit. This shows that he was under the restriction of the Lord. His boasting was according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure, the ruling God, had apportioned to him. The Lord is especially interested in restricting the young people. If the young ones do not have a heart to serve the Lord, He will stir them up to serve Him. But once they have been stirred up, He will limit them. Human nature does not like this kind of limitation....If we can take God's ups and downs, we will eventually become useful in His work...Our natural man wants to be without limitation. However, God knows our problem. Therefore, He sets up boundaries and restrictions so that we may stay within the measure that He has apportioned to us.

Testimony When I was living in my parents' house in Tokyo, shortly after I started my church life and before I came to Kobe, I had a desire to open my house very strongly, not only for the home meeting, but also for the Lord's table Meeting. At that time, there was a trend to have the Lord's table meeting in different districts, and there was a possibility to have a district meeting at my house if we had serving brothers. However, this did not happen because there were no serving brothers in the area, and I was very disappointed at the time. But then I got married and moved to Kobe, so I realized that it was the Lord's appropriate arrangement that the district meeting was not held at my house. This is because once the Lord's table meeting is established, it is not easy to stop. It has been more than 20 years since I got married and started living in Kobe. Last year, my husband came up with the idea to renovate our house and start a district meeting as a sub-district within the Motoyama district. I started out with anxiety about how I could increase the number of people in the district where the average age was older. But under the guidance of the brothers and sisters who were leading us, we were able to fellowship more closely and invite our friends little by little. In late January, a friend in his 80s was baptized. Thank the Lord.