

Priests Offering Sacrifices - 1 Peter 2:4-8 – Part 2

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INTRODUCTION

This morning we're returning to the same passage we studied last week, 1 Peter 2, verses 4 to 8...a passage that reveals the calling of every Christ-follower to be a priest. Last week we focused on what it means to be a priest today, and then we pulled from the passage 3 ways God transforms us to be effective in our calling as priests: 1) Drawing near to Christ with faith; 2) Letting Christ be the only cornerstone of our building; and 3) living out of the new identity God has given us in Christ, where we're *alive, chosen, and precious in the sight of God*, no matter what anyone else thinks about us, says about us, or does to us. Now today, we'll focus on the stone house God is building out of us, his living stones, and what his effective priests are intended to do in that house.

RECOGNIZING THE CORNERSTONE OF GOD'S HOUSE

And as we begin this morning, we need to remind ourselves once again that all of this is centered on Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of God's building...a stone that appears to be worthless and irritating and a dangerous trip-hazard to many people, but is actually chosen and of infinite value in the sight of God and is the only stone that will ever provide the stability and strength and direction needed for the house of God's glory and presence. To illustrate this point, I want share an interesting story from local history before we read our passage. In your sermon notes, your first heading is this: *Recognizing the Cornerstone of God's House*. So here we go with a little history to begin:

Back when the Old West was being settled, pioneers flocked across the country to California and Oregon. In one particular spot on the Eastern slopes of the Rockies there was a large, dirt covered rock protruding in the middle of the trail. Wagon wheels were broken on it and men tripped over it.

Finally someone dug up the odd stone and rolled it off trail into a nearby stream. The stream was too wide to jump over, but people used the stone as a step to cross the cold creek. It was used for years, until finally one settler built his cabin near the stream. He moved the odd stone out of the stream and placed it in his cabin to serve as a doorstep.

As years passed, railroads were built and towns sprang up. The old settler's grandson went East to study geology. On a visit to his grandfather's cabin, the grandson happened to examine the old lump of stone and discovered within that lump of dirt and rock was the largest pure gold nugget ever discovered on the Eastern slope of the Rockies. It had been there for three generations, and people never recognized its value. To some it was a stumbling stone to be removed. To others it was a stepping-stone, and to others it was just a heavy rock. But only the grandson saw it for what it really was--a lump of pure gold... *(From a sermon by David Dykes, sermoncentral.com)*

Let's not miss the reality of who Jesus is...the cornerstone of God's building, chosen and precious and alive and able to give life and value and honor to all those who draw near to him in faith.

So many people are irritated by Jesus. They want him gone, out of the way, removed, so they can get on with their lives without any accountability to God or any absolute truth affecting how they live their lives. They use his name as a curse word. He's just in the way of what they want to do. He's just a tripping-hazard. They don't see that he's a massive gold nugget that can completely transform their lives and given them life and hope and a future. Why? Because their hearts are set on the bright, shiny things of this world...things that look beautiful to the eyes, but in the end turn out to be fool's gold.

But for those who will stop and take a good look at Jesus Christ...who will ask God to open their eyes to who he really is...and then who will trust and follow him, instead of following their endless pursuit of fool's gold...These will find that Jesus is the largest pure, gold nugget ever discovered in the universe...no longer a tripping hazard or a door stop. But instead a gold nugget that will infinitely enrich their lives and forever provide the rock-solid and dazzlingly beautiful cornerstone for the house God is building out of them...a house that will withstand all the

storms and tornadoes and hurricanes of life and be a place where God himself dwells and is revealed to the world.

This is the picture Peter gives us in our passage. Let's read it as we begin our study today. 1 Peter 2:4-8:

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." 7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

Jesus is the only cornerstone of God's house, and all Christ-followers – all who come to him in repentance and faith – are being built together into God's house, the place of his dwelling, the place where he is loved and served and glorified and made known to the world. And in his house, a moveable house like the Tabernacle, we are all called to live as *priests offering sacrifices*.

So in the remainder of our time, our focus will be on this house God is building on Christ the cornerstone, and the spiritual sacrifices God's priests are to be making in that house.

BEING BUILT TOGETHER INTO GOD'S HOUSE

So let's tackle house construction first. The next heading in your sermon notes is this: *Being Built Together into God's House*. Now the first thing to notice about this house is that it's always in process of being constructed. In other words, it's never completely done until Christ returns. The phrase in verse 5 is this: ***are being built up as a spiritual house***. The verb is continuous. It's not past tense. It's not future. It's present and continuing.

Secondly, this house is a spiritual house, not a physical building, and the stones that are used in the construction are people. Peter says: ***you yourselves*** [in other words, all Christ-followers] ***like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house***. If you imagine for a moment the construction of a physical stone house, you get the picture of what's happening here. Each stone is added one by one to the building and connected to the other stones with mortar, and each stone is set in relation to the cornerstone that started it all. And as each stone is added and remains in place, the building grows bigger and taller and more visible in the surrounding countryside.

Eventually, we might think of it growing into one of those awe-inspiring castles people flock to see in Europe...a castle that brings great glory to its builder, who in this case is Jesus Christ himself. As we come to him, letting him be our cornerstone, he's the One who builds us up into a spiritual house. God's house is built with people. And just as a stone house requires many stones connected together, so also God's spiritual house requires many people connected with each other and working together in order to actually function as a house.

Imagine trying to build a stone house with just 2 stones, you and Christ. That wouldn't be a house, would it? It might be a monument, but it certainly wouldn't be a house where priests could live inside and do their job. This reminds us the importance of unity and being the body of Christ together, each member working in their giftings in cooperation with each other. This applies in this local church and in the church universal. All true Christ-followers who believe God's word and are seeking to follow it are a part of the stone house God is building. We work together. We aren't in competition with each other. And our relationships are to have staying power...loving each other and remaining committed to each other through all the ups and downs of life. That's how God's house grows and becomes stronger.

And finally, as we think about this spiritual house being built out of us, we remember its connection to God's houses from the past...the Tabernacle and the Temple. In fact, the Greek word translated, "house," in verse 5, is the same word used in the New Testament to refer to both the Tabernacle and the Temple. And as we think of the purposes of both the Tabernacle and the Temple, we remember that both of them were to be places set apart for God's presence and his glory and the revealing of him to the world. And the same is true for the

spiritual house God is building out of us. It's to be a place where God's presence dwells and is revealed to the world. As God's people conduct themselves in love for him and each other, his glory and presence is revealed more and more powerfully.

Listen to how Paul echoes this truth in Ephesians 2:19-22:

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

All Christ followers are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. This happens as Christ serves as our cornerstone and as we are joined together as his followers, loving each other and staying connected and each of us serving in the roles and giftings God has given us. This is the picture we need firmly fixed in our minds as we cooperate with God's building project and allow him to build us into a beautiful, awe-inspiring castle that brings great glory to him.

OFFERING SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES IN GOD'S HOUSE

Now as we look at the last part of verse 5, in 1 Peter chapter 2, we notice that in this spiritual house God is building out of us, we are ***to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ***. We focused last week on this calling to be priests, and now this morning we want to zero in on the offering of spiritual sacrifices. That's what we're to be doing as priests in God's house. I've labeled this section in your notes: *Offering Spiritual Sacrifices in God's House*. What does this mean? We know we're no longer called to make animal sacrifices to cover sin, because Jesus has made the perfect sacrifice of himself, once for all time. So what kind of sacrifices are we as priests to be making today?

To answer this question, let's first make sure we understand what a sacrifice is. The Greek word here means essentially, "an offering." Something offered up by us to God. The picture is: "Here you go, God. I'm giving this to you. Though I could keep it for myself and use it for me and my glory, I offer it back to you

because I love you, I want to be like you, and I want to further your purposes in my life and in the lives of other people.” That’s the picture of a sacrifice. And sacrifices, by their very nature, cost us something. We’re taking something that we could use for ourselves and using it instead for God and his glory.

Jesus himself gave us the perfect example of sacrifice. Though he is God and possesses all power and authority and is worthy of all praise and honor, he humbled himself and took on human flesh and became obedient to the Father even to the point of death on the cross. And he did this voluntarily. He sacrificed all of himself for the good of you and I and to accomplish the Father’s plan to rescue us and reconcile us to our God and Creator. And in this greatest of all sacrifices, he revealed God’s glory and goodness and love and justice to the world in human terms we can all understand. And as his followers today, his priests, we too reveal God and his glory and goodness to the world as we walk in his steps, setting ourselves aside over and over again for the glory of God and to reveal him to the world.

As Jesus said in Matthew 16:24-25:

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Though it makes no sense to the world and even sometimes to us, life and hope and joy and peace is found in setting ourselves aside, living sacrificially, to reveal God’s glory and goodness to each other and to those who don’t know him yet. Though it seems like we’re losing our life when we do this, we actually end up finding the life we’ve been longing for and experiencing firsthand the glory and power of the living God working through us. Do you believe that today?

A quick survey of the New Testament gives us many examples of what it means to offer sacrifices as God’s priests living in his spiritual house. Let’s walk through a few of them. The most basic and fundamental sacrifice we make is the sacrifice of our bodies and minds. In other words, offering up our hands, our feet, our minds, the entirety of the physical bodies God has given us, to be used for his purposes. Saying to God daily: “This body is a gift you’ve given to me. Now that you’ve brought me to life spiritually through Christ, I offer it back to you to be used for

your purposes and your glory. Take me and use me and reveal yourself to the world through this offering of all of me.”

Paul, in Romans 12:1-2, describes this for us:

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The offering of our bodies and our minds to God is the most foundational sacrifice we make daily as priests of God.

Paul, later in Romans 15:15-16, gives us another example of a priestly sacrifice we make today...a sacrifice he was making himself with his whole life. He says:

15 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

In his role as a priest making sacrifices, Paul was setting himself aside to fully proclaim the gospel, the good news of Christ, to the Gentiles. This was part of his priestly service: *speaking the words of the gospel to the Gentiles, and doing it at great cost to himself*. Traveling all around, getting beaten and ridiculed and stoned. And like Paul, a second sacrifice we make as priests today is the opening our mouths to share the good news of Christ and spread the knowledge of God wherever we go.

And the final passage I want to look at pertaining to the sacrifices we make today as priests is found in Hebrews 13, verses 13 to 16. In these verses we discover at least 4 more sacrifices. Here we go:

13 Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. 14 For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is

to come. 15 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. 16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

The first sacrifice we see here is *bearing the reproach of Jesus*. In other words, being willing to experience ridicule, mocking, persecution and shame as we represent Christ and share his good news. Speaking for myself, I've often been resistant to opening my mouth with the gospel because I'm concerned about how people will respond and the possibility that they might belittle my faith in Christ or ridicule me. Or that they might stump me with some difficult question and make me look foolish. Have you ever had those thoughts?

Well, what this boils down to is an unwillingness to bear the same reproach Jesus Christ endured on my behalf. It boils down to me being more concerned about myself and my glory than about God and his glory. Yet as God's priest today, being willing to put myself out there and risk ridicule and persecution for my wonderful Savior, is a sacrifice I am called to make daily. May God lead each of us to a complete willingness to bear the reproach of Christ as we offer his good news to others.

The second sacrifice we see in these verses from Hebrews is ***the sacrifice of praise to God, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name***. This is verbally praising God, giving him glory and thanks in song, in words as we go throughout our days. Being willing to out-loud give him credit for everything he graciously provides for us and for who he is and his glory and steadfast love that we see all throughout the world. Not staying silent anymore because we don't want to offend anybody or because we're afraid of being ridiculed, but instead learning to speak out the knowledge of God and the evidences we see of him everywhere, no matter who agrees. Speak it out. Give him praise. Give him glory and honor and thanks. This is another sacrifice we as priests are to be making today.

Thirdly, we see the sacrifice of *doing good to others*...looking out not only for our own interests, but also for the interests of others. Actively seeking to do good in practical ways to those around us...even our enemies. This is called loving one another, which sums up all the commandments of God in Scripture. Are you seeking to diligently do good to others in practical ways, no matter what? This is

another sacrifice we make today as priests of God. And when we do, people will powerfully see God and his love revealed in ways that will draw them into his kingdom.

And finally, in this Hebrew passage, we see the sacrifice of *sharing what we have with others*. Our tendency is so easily to hoard, and to protect, and to build up our financial kingdom, and the more money we get, usually the less generous we become. But as priests of God, he calls us to share generously with those in need...our possessions, our money, our energy, our time. To remember that we're just stewards of all God has given us. It's not really ours. It's all his, and he's entrusted it to us for a time to use wisely for his glory. Yes, we can enjoy what he's given us, but the even greater joy comes when we hold loosely to it and are willing to share it generously with others for their good and God's glory. The sacrifice of sharing with those in need.

CONCLUSION

These are just a few of the sacrifices we make as priests of God today, and the goal in it all is to love God and love other people and thereby reveal the living God and the knowledge of him to all the world, bringing great glory to him and bringing others to the new life we've found in Christ. To review these sacrifices one more time as we close:

- 1) The sacrifice of our bodies and minds to God and his purposes;
- 2) The sacrifice of spreading the good news of Christ;
- 3) The sacrifice of bearing his reproach;
- 4) The sacrifice of verbally praising God and publicly acknowledging his name;
- 5) The sacrifice of doing good to others;
- 6) The sacrifice of sharing with those in need.

Imagine how powerfully God will work through us and reveal himself to the world if each of these sacrifices are made by us daily, as we deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow our sacrificial Savior!...This is how we will find our life, though to the outsider it seems like we're losing it.

God is building his house, the place of his dwelling, using each Christ-follower as stones in that house, that beautiful castle. Let's let him place us where we belong in that house. Let's remain connected with other believers and always living in steadfast love for each other. And as priests living in God's house, let's live our calling of offering sacrifices daily out of love for God and to reveal him powerfully to the world! These sacrifices are pleasing and acceptable to God because we make them in Christ and by the power of his Spirit. God, work through us and let your kingdom come as we follow you into life!