

Gamma 13

Study 6

1 Peter 2:4-8

Questions

1. Peter is building a series of magnificent pictures to depict the various spiritual realities of a Christians new life but in order to appreciate these images describe what role and significance the temple played in the lives of Israel ?

The temple played the central role in the life of Israel as it represented the presence of God. If God in covenant with them would be their God and they His people then in the center of religious life had to be the temple. However the presence of God had to be largely veiled and remote from the people because the main issue of contention between God and man is sin which had caused separation and spiritual death. Gone were the intimate days where Adam and Eve would walk with their Creator. Sin banished them from the presence of God but later on God chose the one man Abraham to be the vehicle to reconcile mankind again to Himself. He made a covenant with Abraham and declared that through him all nations would be blessed. The presence of God became a regular feature when Israel was constituted as the chosen nation at Mt Sinai. A tabernacle was built to specifications and would be the locus where man could regularly interact with God, yet not fully because of sin. The way the temple was built and activities carried out carefully demonstrated the distance of man from the actual presence of God. The people could worship God by sacrifice again but were always reminded of their sins on a regular basis as they could not just approach the tabernacle. Only the specially dedicated priests could offer sacrifices at the tabernacle on their behalf. Even then only once a year at Yom Kippur the solitary high priest would be the only one to enter the Holy of Holies to bring a sacrifice in blood on the mercy seat and utter the name of God just in that one instance. The whole issue of distance from the presence of God was to demonstrate the holy glory of God and the sinfulness of man always emphasizing the need for blood sacrifice as blood represented life.

The tabernacle progressed to the temple and the temple represented the one place where the presence of God would be encountered and worshipped.

2. The first picture is living stones and a spiritual house or temple. What is Peter trying to convey?

Peter is now stating just like Paul that the physical temple has been superseded. It is replaced by the new spiritual temple this time it is not a physical building but a spiritual entity the church. The individual members become the building blocks of the church, teeming with eternal life so they are called "living stones", believers imbued with the eternal life that comes from the corner stone of the temple which is Jesus Christ Himself. The church is a dynamic entity that grows and adapts but pulsates with the life of Jesus its cornerstone

3. What does Peter mean by Jesus being the corner stone of the temple? What other cornerstones do you think that some churches are tempted to be building upon?

Peter is saying that the new spiritual temple is only possible because the whole thing rests on the corner stone who is Jesus. He is described as the ultimate living stone due to his victorious resurrection from the dead.

The corner stone is the most important part of any building and every subsequent stone that is laid takes its dimensions and place according to the specifications of the corner stone. Take the corner stone away and the whole structure collapses. Peter is referring to the spiritual temple of which Jesus is the cornerstone. He is the living stone which reflects his resurrection power and because we are connected to this cornerstone we too ...unlike dead cold hard stones have become living stones. Hence the new temple rests upon the finished work of Jesus on the cross where the ultimate sacrifice acceptable to God was made and on his resurrection which was the victory that has overcome death for the church. As such the church reaches out to the community based on the finished work of Christ as we bring his work to the world and God calls all peoples to Himself. The way the church operates, coheres as a group and how individuals interact with each other internally is based completely on the person of Jesus which is now communicated through the Word of God.

Any church that is built based on else will not stand in the eyes of God.

The temptation is to build on other things like fellowship or common interests so the church operates pretty much like a club where people with similar pursuits like going out to eat together.

Others build their church on meeting the felt needs of people, their focus is making the church user friendly to the non believers. The service is tailored to fit their needs and plenty of services are provided to keep people satisfied but the gospel is seldom emphasized apart from a cursory mention on a Sunday and then vaguely with no deep exposition of the Word. Typically the sermons are short to suit the short attention span of the people and the worship songs are focussed on making the people feel loved and valued with little in the way expressing the awesome majesty of God nor the wonder of His sacrifice upon the cross.

4. Look closely at the vision of the church as the new temple and list out some of the spiritual truths that Peter is making here and list out the practical implications of these truths to our daily life

There are several observations we need to make

Firstly we in the church have become the locus of spiritual worship of God. We are freed from the constraints of a physical building. Wherever we are in any part of the world we as a church are the only locus in which God will be worshipped. This is a tremendous privilege. We have become the most important institution on earth. It is not government or empires or the UN that catches God's eye and favour it is His spiritual house the church. The implication is for us to be mindful of this privilege and be careful to live holy lives as the world sees us as His body. Privilege carries great responsibility. In the early church Ananias and Saphira were unceremoniously struck down for just lying and this struck awe amongst the people who were then careful when it came to affairs of the church because of this special holy nature. All too often today we come to church with a much more cavalier attitude forgetting the holiness of God. Church discipline is rarely practiced and sin is often tolerated in the name of love.

Secondly the church is a work in progress in verse 5 a we observe *...you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house*. It is not the picture of a static building which is completed as yet but one in which the development is on going, we are in the process of being fitted into a spiritual house based on Jesus. As the living stones are fitted in line with the cornerstone believers are constantly being moulded and fitted together templated after the pattern of the cornerstone. It is a process that is not complete and we need to continue to pattern our lives after His as that is the only design that will result in the glorious image of the church of Gods as the locus of God's presence in a broken world. So we must be constantly growing and fitting to each other and to Christ and helping each other fit to fulfil this glorious vision of church.

Thirdly, there are no free standing stones which is the sharpest indictment to the rampant individualism that is plaguing the modern church today. This is probably the legacy of the Western culture that promotes believers coming to church to get something out of the whole experience. They have little to no loyalty to a particular church and stay around to get their needs met every week whether it be Sunday school education for their kids. The spiritual vision that Peter paints is the temple as a corporate whole not a bunch of free standing stones. Free standing stones do not amount to any significant structure, they are useless as they are unconnected to the cornerstone and they serve no purpose other than their own. Together connected to Christ the vision is the glorious temple lit up with the very presence of God. The responsibility is therefore for the believers to belong to the church. To participate, to be built up which means to fit with all the other living stones. But some of us will say "I don't really like the other believers especially church people" but that is the whole idea that we seek to be fitted together as a spiritual house. The church is not a cinema or the mall we go to get our needs met or listen to a great entertaining sermon it is a spiritual body to which we need to belong...to fit together to fulfil the true vision of the church.

Lastly, the spiritual house which is the church is the only place on earth where spiritual sacrifices that are offered to God will be accepted. Much of the

ceremony and practice of the old Testament temple were exacting in detail as Israel could not offer any old sacrifice it wanted. Every thing done had to be performed in a way the was acceptable to God. You could not approach God unless you were acceptable, bring a sacrifice and the right sacrifice an unblemished lamb or specific animal for sacrifice. You could not do the sacrifice on your own it had to be done by a priest on your behalf. Even then the priests had to had offered sacrifice in the precisely prescribed manner by God.

The best example was Nadab and Abihu who were not less than sons of Aaron *Leviticus 10:1-2 (ESV) Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. 2 And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.*

The immediate consequence of this action was instant death

Leviticus 10:3 (ESV) Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord has said: 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace.

The issue is the holiness and glory of God it had to be upheld

Fast forward to the new Testament and now Peter says we are the temple.

1 Peter 2:5 (ESV) 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.

We are now the privileged priests in fact better than priests because we can offer spiritual sacrifices which are completely acceptable to God because they are offered through our Lord Jesus Christ. It was His ultimate sacrifice for our sins that had done away with all animal sacrifice, that had torn away any dividing wall between God and man as demonstrated by years and years of separation and ceremony and distance in the old temple. This is a wonderful invitation for us to freely offer our sacrifice of praise , worship in song, living out our professions dedicated to God , our helping the poor, our sacrifice in service everything done in Christ and for Christ to the glory of God is now acceptable. It is acceptable because it is done in Christ and now we are not judged upon the merits of our work but the fact that it is offered through the name of Jesus. There are no more barriers in Christ. This is a tremendous incentive to worship.

5. One of the most pernicious threats to the corporate life of the church is individualism. Kevin Santiago lists 4 areas where it causes harm. Can you discuss how individualism does this in each of these 4 areas?

- 1. It paradoxically stunts your personal growth**
- 2. Individualism destroys personal meaning**
- 3. It takes away from the image of God**
- 4. It works against the mission of the church**

4 Reasons Why Individualism Kills the Church

Kevin B Santiago n May 1, 2017

I will never forget my college graduation ceremony. Our class president stood before the graduating class and began to speak about the importance of working hard and doing what's right. It sounded like something from a cheesy, low-budget film. But there was one part that stuck out to me.

As he was ending the speech, he began to list all the important things in life like family, friends, and having fun. He went down the list attempting to build anticipation in the crowd and said, "While these things are all important, never forget the most important thing in life..." He paused for dramatic effect, but I could tell where he was going, so I decided to disrupt the silence and yelled, "Jesus!"

Despite being in a secular university, my classmates laughed and looked at me. But the speaker paid no mind to my inappropriate outburst and said, "Yourself. You are the most important thing in life."

It's all about you. As Westerners, we live in an incredibly individualistic society where the mantra of life is to "do it yourself," "depend on no one," and "always look out for number one." We favor people who against all odds can overcome every obstacle, and be a trailblazer to their own success—regardless if they lied, cheated, and stole to get there. But is this form of individualism really a good thing? And more importantly, is individualism good for the church?

While no one would argue that taking care of yourself is bad, individualism in the West isn't really focusing on your health and well-being; rather, it is a complete self-centered, narcissistic approach to life where the well-being of others is always secondary to yourself. Western individualism crowns you as Lord and King.

But this sort of way of life destroys the people that God has made us to be and, more importantly, kills the mission of the church. Here are four reasons why individualism kills the church and why you should work to avoid it.

1. Individualism stunts your personal growth

You would think that someone who focuses solely on their own self-development would be a stable, healthy, and growing person, but it just isn't the case.

The Bible continuously reminds us to value others and consider their interests above our own ([Philippians 2:3](#)). Although sin tempts us to do otherwise, this is what it means to be a good, moral human being—and how to function as the church. It's in us to care, and when we violate this need, we violate who we are. It's in us to care, and when we violate this need, we violate who we are.

Personal growth, for this matter, is not only about developing as a person, it's about better contributing as a person for God's glory. For example, if you grow in wisdom you not only make better choices for yourself, but you have the power to help others make better choices for themselves, which is how the church is suppose to benefit one another.

2. Individualism destroys personal meaning

One of the most important questions that you can ever ask yourself is "What is my purpose in life." I know, sounds like a question that focuses on individualism. However, there is nothing wrong with having individuality. The problem comes when we think of ourselves as the center of the universe, but this takes away all

meaning in life. There is no sense in growing as an individual if you have no way to help others through your growth.

Community gives us a reason to excel at life. Think about a village that sends off a young man or woman to learn a skill so that they can come back and provide toward that village's need. Or a parent who sacrifices their goals for the sake of their children. Considering the needs of others helps us find meaning in life.

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For Christians, our meaning comes from Christ and living out his mission on this earth, and through this lens we can figure out what that means for us as individuals.

3. Individualism takes away from the image of God

"You do not need to be a part of the church to have a thriving relationship with God; your relationship with Jesus is just that...your relationship with Jesus."

As a pastor who serves in a more liberal part of the country, I hear this sentiment regularly. However, when a person withholds themselves from fellowship with the body, they aren't just hurting themselves, but they are hurting the church.

God has given each of us different talents, personalities, and insights that all represent a unique part of who God is.

Scripture tells us that we are all image bearers of God ([Genesis 1:27](#)). God has given each of us different talents, personalities, and insights that all represent a unique part of who God is, which means we individually and holistically represents him. As image bearers of God, when a person removes themselves from the church a piece of that image goes with him—along with the talents that God has given.

4. Individualism works against the mission of the church

The Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations" ([Matthew 28:19](#)) is at its strongest when individuals see themselves as one part of a whole.

Thinking that my needs, accomplishments, and well-being is all that matters conflicts in the church's best efforts to actualize the mission of God.

Think about it: If a church is full of committed Christians who have a different kinds of professional skills (e.g., craftsman, hospitality, custodians, teachers, businessman, doctor, etc.), then they can be very effective at meeting a variety of needs. For example, the businessman can team up with the doctor who teamed up with the pilot who teamed up with the teaching missionary to provide medical aid to someone in need. It becomes a beautiful picture of collective and missional individuality.

We are like puzzle pieces. We each have unique shapes and colors that when left alone offer no clear picture, but when placed together can offer a beautiful image—an image of Christ. When we resist selfish individualism and crown Christ as king instead of ourselves, together we can make a difference for his glory.

<http://www.christianguard.com/4-reasons-why-individualism-kills-the-church/>