

1 **Stones and Bones**

- How the church thrives when the stones and bones come alive!

2 **Introduction**

- We occasionally hear about troublesome church members who manage to upset their congregations, but the people making trouble for the Abbey Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Bath, England, aren't current members but those from centuries past.
- The people causing problems aren't the deadbeats in the pews but the dead bodies in the basement.
- And they're threatening to upset the church in quite a literal way.

3 **Bath Abbey**

- The church, commonly known as Bath Abbey, is an Anglican parish.
- It was founded as a monastery in the seventh century and has had Christian worship going on at that site ever since.
- The current building is a Gothic cathedral more than 500 years old, but it sits on the remains of a massive Norman cathedral that predated it.

4 **Bath, England**

- Bath, England is a city in the southwest of England approximately 97 miles west of London and 13 miles southeast of Bristol.
- Due to the hot springs in the area, the Romans as early as AD 43, built hot baths here to provide a sanctuary of rest and relaxation for their troops.
- As you know, after a hard day fighting barbarians, nothing is better than a good and relaxing hot bath.
- In fact, so nice were these hot baths they named the city after them.

5 **Bath Abbey**

- The problem in Bath Abbey is that, over the centuries, an estimated 6,000 people have been buried just below the stone flooring of the church.
- Over time, as those bodies were reduced to bones and as the graves settled, holes opened up beneath the floor, threatening the very stability of the building.

6 **Bath Abbey**

- Today, the likelihood that the floors could collapse beneath the feet of someone about to recite the Lord's Prayer on any given Sunday morning is very real and unsettling.
- An extensive project is now underway to stabilize the edifice.

7 **Bath Abbey**

- It involves . . .

- digging out much of the soil and human remains that are now under the floor,
- filling the voids with concrete and foundational support beams, then
- putting the bones, coffin parts back in the ground, then
- putting the stone floor back in with all the inscribed plaques that describe who is buried, then
- finally a prayer of re-internment.

8 1 Peter 2

- However, as the Apostle Peter says in 1 Peter 2, the church of Jesus Christ does not consist of old stones and bones, but living stones.
- As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet 2:4–5 NIV)

9 1 Peter 2

- For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” (1 Pet 2:6 NIV)
- In other words, Jesus is not just a living stone, but a precious stone
- Why? because he is a cornerstone.
- And like a cornerstone that supports the integrity of the whole building, he can be trusted when we put our faith in him.

10 Capstone

- Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. (1 Pet 2:7 NIV)
- For believers, Jesus is a cornerstone, but for unbelievers Jesus is a capstone.

11 Capstone

- Like a cornerstone, a capstone holds things together.
- Remove the cornerstone and the building will be weakened, and will not be as strong and will start to crumble.
- But remove the capstone, the building will immediately fall with a great crash and people who are nearby will suffer the consequences.
- They may not have time even to run.

12 Capstone

- He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed. (Matt 21:44 NIV)
- Both are not good. But one is better than the other.

- It is better for us to fall on the stone ourselves and be broken than for the stone to fall on us and be crushed.
- In other words, accepting Christ and be His disciple will cost us everything, but not to accept Christ will destroy us.
- If we reject the Gospel's offer of mercy—through faith in Christ and repentance toward God, there will be indeed be trouble one day.

13 Homework Assignment

- Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: “‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? (Matt 21:42 NIV)
 - Why is this marvelous?
 - Whose eyes is this referring to?

14 We Are Stones Too

- As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet 2:4–5 NIV)
- In other words, the Holy Spirit is at work among us—positioning us and arranging us to be something that is greater than ourselves.
- So then the church is not a literal building, but a community of believers in Jesus Christ (living stones) who are to worship God in spirit and truth and as individuals live out their faith as living sacrifices—holy and pleasing to the Lord.

15 God's Body & Temple

- Last week, we talked about how the church is a body with many members and is a living organism.
- So much so, that when someone hurts the church or anyone in the church, Jesus feels it too.
- Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. (1 Cor 3:16–17 NIV)

16 God's Purpose

- So then, the church, which is God's building or temple, is sacred (special) to Him.
- His purpose is through the church to reveal His glory to the world, so that those in whom God has called can come to faith in Jesus Christ.
- This is why we need to keep the unity of the Spirit, because a house divided God cannot bless.
- In fact, we need each other and each part of the body is indispensable and we all need equal concern for each other.

17 Build Up the Body

- Immature believers don't always have the mind of the Spirit.
 - Sometimes they value some gifts of the body more than others.
 - Instead of seeking to uncover their own gifts and calling, they'll seek after those gifts that offer the most status and prestige.
 - God wants us to use whatever gift the Spirit of God has given us and do so faithfully.
 - Besides, if we desire a gift—let us seek after those gifts that build up the body the most. [See 1 Cor. 12-14]

18 **Strong Foundation**

- What makes the church strong is having a strong foundation.
- Christ is our foundation and the cornerstone of our faith.
- Rejecting Him or His word the building will crumble and all we'll have left are dead bones.
- But if we cooperate with the Spirit and allow him to use us as living stones, He will create something that is bigger than the sum of our parts, which will bring glory and honor to His name.

19 **Pure Worship**

- God wants us to live and act as a biblical functioning community, who have equal concern for each other and see themselves not just ministering to their fellow brothers and sisters, but to Jesus.
- When we use our gifts, talents, and resources to help the body of Christ to function, we are like the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her hair.
- In other words, when we serve the church we are not doing it for the pastor, we are actually ministering to Jesus and He receives it as pure worship.

20 **Where is Jesus Today?**

- Today, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus lives as the body of Christ.
- So then, one can't say they love Jesus, but hate the church.
- The church may have some maturity issues, but to look at the church as some sort of man-made organization is a serious mistake.
- It is a spiritual building made up of living stones and each member of this body has worth and function.

21 **The Church at Corinth**

- The Corinthian church neglected this fact and so brought judgment upon itself, because they neglected the body of the Lord and how each part is not only important, but also indispensable.
- That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. (1 Cor 11:30 NIV)
- In other words, God can't use the church to bring Him glory, if we don't honor one another and use our gifts to build up the whole.

22 Communion

- So then, as we take communion tonight, which is a memorial of the sacrifice Christ gave for us who believe—that is His church.
- Let us, also consider, how we can live out our faith for the good of His body, so that we can also be that spiritual building made with living stones who offer before God spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to Him. (1 Peter 2:5)
- Our purpose is to bring God glory, which is accomplished when we become a biblical functioning community of believers—allowing God to watch over his word to perform it.

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