



# Living Stones

Sunday January 28, 2021

<sup>1</sup> Peter 2:1-12 (ESV) So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

<sup>4</sup> As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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.” <sup>7</sup> 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,” <sup>8</sup> and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when

they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

**Introduction:** If you have ever traveled out of the country to a place where you didn't speak the language or know the culture then you know what it's like to really stand out as a stranger. People can tell when someone isn't from their country. The language, the accent, the mannerisms, the styles, the food choices are just some of the things that identify a tourist or an immigrant.

In the same way we should stand out from those who have not placed their faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. As citizens of heaven we are called to be a people that reflect the nature of our King.

We are called to be different in our conduct. We are called to live a life of worship not in lip service but in life service.

Notice how Peter continues his thought from the previous verses in chapter one where he has written that those who have faith and hope in the Father (1:21b) and have been purified by obeying the truth (1:22a) are to move on to sincere love for one another (1:22b) having been born again of the seed of the word of God, therefore...

1 Peter 1:1 (ESV) put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

(Voice) so get rid of hatefulness and deception, of insincerity and jealousy and slander.

(NLT) so get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech.

All of these sins that he tells us to get rid of are the kinds of conduct that tear at the fabric of the church, ripping away the threads of love that keep us together.

If we have been born again of God by the means of His word (1:23), then we are exhorted to lay aside (cast off, get rid or throw away) all in our lives that quenches our sincere love for one another.

**How do we do this?**

**Desire the word**

1 Peter 2:2-3 (NKJV) as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

(NLT) Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, <sup>3</sup> now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness.

Peter is not writing to baby believers alone he is writing to all believers young and old. He is saying that if we are to grow and develop in sincere love for one another then our desire for the word of God needs to be equal to that of a newborn baby who craves for its mother's milk.

If we have tasted or experienced the goodness of God in saving grace then we will long to know Him more through the word and seek to live a life of worship and surrender.

### **Live a life of worship**

**1 Peter 2:4-5 (ESV)** As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> 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.

### **Worship starts with knowing that:**

**Jesus is the chief cornerstone or foundation of the church.**

It's because of Him that we can worship. It's because of what He did that we come into the presence of the Father. Our lives are built on His person and work. He is the living word!

### **We are the spiritual temple**

**1 Peter 2:5a (ESV)** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house... Peter uses this metaphor to describe how he saw the church as a whole. Unlike the physical temple made of brick and mortar the church is a living temple consisting of many people who have come to faith in Christ.

A brick by itself is of little use. Its usefulness is maximized when used alongside other bricks. In the same way, apart from one another, we cannot complete the work God has called us to do.

### **We are a priesthood**

The next Old Testament image Peter uses to describe us is that of a **priesthood**.

**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.

A priesthood is a community of priests who work together. In other words, we aren't called to live in isolation we are called into community.

As a community of spiritual priests, we are called to offer **spiritual sacrifices** to God.

1 Peter 2:4-5 (ESV) As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> 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.

### **What are spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God?**

Psalms 50:14a,23 (ESV) Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving. <sup>23</sup> The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me

Psalms 141:2 (ESV) Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!

Romans 12:1-2 (ESV) 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. <sup>2</sup> 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.

Philippians 4:18 (ESV) I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

Hebrews 13:14-15 (ESV) For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. <sup>15</sup> Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

The world cannot offer these types of sacrifices because they have rejected Christ the chief cornerstone. But you can because...

1 Peter 2:9-10 (ESV) ...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

There was a time that we were far from God. But God in His great mercy reached out to us and caused us to be born again. He is now our Father, who has redeemed us through Christ His son and may us part of His family, a spiritual temple, a priesthood of worshipers who live a life of surrender to His will.

### **Our Passage closes with an appeal from Peter to believers.**

1 Peter 2:11-12 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable,

so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation

(Philipps) I beg you, as those whom I love, to live in this world as strangers and “temporary residents”, to keep clear of the desires of your lower natures, for they are always at war with your souls.

(NCV) Dear friends, you are like foreigners and strangers in this world. I beg you to avoid the evil things your bodies want to do that fight against your soul.

(Voice) Beloved, remember *you don't belong in this world*. You are resident aliens living in exile, so resist those desires of the flesh that battle against the soul.

(Message) Friends, this world is not your home, so don't make yourselves cozy in it. Don't indulge your ego at the expense of your soul.

What does it look like to be a faith community that is surrounded by those who are opposed to the things of God?

If our hearts have been made pure, we ought to submit to a higher standard, a different way of living. We ought to live a life of the word and worship. As a priesthood, we ought to reflect the love of God as we walk with each other through our mess because the gospel is what unifies us. We ought to be distinct, holy, set apart because of what Christ has done. He has called us to be a people for His own possession so we would proclaim Him to the world.