

LIVING STONES

"For I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;
and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Galatians 2:20

That's the idea behind "dying to self." We must first die to self if Christ is to live in us. Faith takes us from death into new life, not just any life, but one lived by faith in the One who, out of His great love, gave Himself up for us.

We saw yesterday that since we "have tasted the kindness of the Lord" we are to put off characteristics that do not represent His character, and yearn to know the word of God just as a baby longs for milk. Keep in mind, the goal is not to stay as an infant, but to mature in our spiritual walk so that when trials or false teachings come along, as they will, we won't be as children "tossed to and fro" "carried about by every wind of doctrine." (Ephesians 4:14) Since our growth in Christ will be a direct result of choosing to learn and to apply His Word to our lives, allowing His Spirit to control us, let's set our mind and heart to learn from Him and not let any distraction crowd in as we open His word today.

Our text today is 1 Peter 2:4-8, take a moment to read verses 1-8 to set context, and we'll begin.

1 Peter - Week 3, Day 4

Since we have "tasted the kindness of the Lord" verse 4 teaches that the natural response would be to focus on "coming to Him as to a living stone..." The phrase means, *to continuously participate in coming to Christ*. Did you catch the word, "continuously"? We not only initiate the action to keep coming to Him, we are affected by the result of coming to Him.

This stone mentioned is "lithon," and it's a building stone. At a point in time, you and I had to come to the realization that we were sinners who needed a Savior. It was on that day that we came to Him in agreement that He is the One our faith would be built on. Our cornerstone. The One which everything else in our life is centered on, supported from, and founded upon.

Do you remember the day? Briefly write your story. It's a good reminder of what Christ did in your life that day. Having it written out will also help in sharing it with others as God leads:

"The stone which the builders rejected has
become the chief corner stone.

This is the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes."

Psalm 118:22-23

While God's plan to build us upon Christ "is marvelous in our eyes," we know there are many who have completely rejected the idea, wanting to build their own world, their own way.

1 Peter - Week 3, Day 4

Rejection can bring strong emotions. No one likes rejection, and no one deserved it less than Jesus Christ, for He was blameless in all His ways. Yet, there He was, "rejected by men," even His own siblings and own people rejected Him.

The word in Koine` Greek is *apodokimázein*, meaning, "to be tested," but this form of the word means, "to throw out in the test." The Israelites had expected the promised Messiah for many years, but when tested against what they expected Him to be, the Jewish people threw Jesus out, rejecting the One who would be the very cornerstone of their faith, nailing Him to a cross.

What does Matthew 21:42-43 say happens at their rejection of this stone?

In Romans 11, it talks about how the Gentiles (those other than the Jews) are grafted in because of their faith, and those who rejected Christ were cut off. Important to note, they are not grafted in to Israel, but into Christ. He was the plan for our redemption.

Oh, but here is the magnificent grace of God - in v. 23 of Romans 11, in regards to those who rejected Him, it says, "And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again." True and glorious fact: God never rejects anyone that comes to Him in faith. That's good news for us, and for all of our loved ones who we pray will come to faith in Him someday!

Look back at verse 4 in our text, while rejected by men, what do we see this stone is in God's sight?

1 Peter - Week 3, Day 4

He is Choice - elect. Jesus the Christ was the designed plan before the foundation of the world. He is Precious - held in high value by the Planner because He knew this plan would be all that was needed to reconcile man to a right relationship with Him. The culmination of all He had prepared, in this one "living stone," for all in Christ would be saved. Verse 5 shows us that Believers are to be, "living stones," also. The words mean, you and I are to make it a matter of principle to continuously live "as living stones," who "are being built up as a spiritual house..." for we have purpose.

In verse 5, what does the rest of the verse say this spiritual house is being built up for?

1)

2)

The phrase *being built up* is in the *passive voice* which means we are being *acted upon to be built up*. God is the One doing the building up of this holy priesthood. He is the provider and enabler. Our job is simply to come to Him.

Holy - set apart for service. In the Old Testament we're given a clear picture of the service the priests were to accomplish. They were anointed by God, and appointed for service, but the most incredible aspect of a priest was that they had access to God. One of the most exciting moments in Christian history was at the death of Christ when the veil that separated God from man was torn from top to bottom allowing direct access to God. As Believers, we now have personal access to God through Christ, our High Priest. If nothing else excites us, that should.

1 Peter - Week 3, Day 4

Read the following verses, and write what you see about our High Priest, and perhaps any response expected of us:

Hebrews 4:14-16

Hebrews 7:23-28

We humans are weak, and so very temporary, we could never achieve what was needed to span the chasm between our righteousness and His, but Christ's sacrifice "made perfect forever"! What a marvelous, crazy transaction, this grace of God!

In Him, we are living stones being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood. As His servant-priests we are to present spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God, but don't miss it, there is only one way that any of our "spiritual sacrifices" are acceptable to God.

Read 1 Peter 2:5, What are the last three words of the verse?

They are never acceptable by the works of our hands. Nor are they acceptable under our own terms.

You might remember the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. Cain brought a sacrifice that HE thought would be perfect, things he'd labored for and was pretty proud of. Abel brought what the Lord had asked of them, an animal sacrifice. We see the Lord accept Abel's sacrifice but reject Cain's because he tried to present the works of his own hands, rejecting

1 Peter - Week 3, Day 4

the plan of sacrifice God desired. A lesson for us, that any spiritual sacrifice we attempt must be through Christ Jesus, and completely by the direction of the Holy Spirit.

What do spiritual sacrifices look like? Look up these verses and make note of what we are to sacrifice -

Romans 12:1

Hebrews 13:15

Hebrews 13:16

He wants our everything - our bodies as a living sacrifice. Our praise should come naturally after what He's done for us, and our deeds should reflect one who belongs to Christ. It's only reasonable to live for Him who died for us.

In 1 Peter 2, verses 6-8 we see that Christ will either be choice and precious, or He will be "a stone of stumbling and offense." Those who reject Him stumble, sadly falling headlong into eternal damnation, as they refuse the elected plan of Christ for their salvation. And the choice we see in the original text is theirs to make.

"Those who God foreknew would reject Christ were placed in the position of having to make that choice. God did not appoint them to reject Christ. God appointed them to make the choice." Dr. Welch. Like Cain, some will reject the plan laid out, and will fall in the process.

1 Peter - Week 3, Day 4

But, for those who believe in Him, what does the end of verse 6 say will be true:

What a sweet thought. To not be disappointed. In a world ripe with disappointment there is One who will never disappoint. He is Faithful and True. I believe it with all my heart. What about you? Are you like the believers who were scattered, that it could be said of you, "though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8)?

If not, what is causing your unbelief? The Lord knows every detail, but perhaps it would be good for you to speak to Him about it, to clear the air.

Peter calls us to make it a matter of principle in our life to come to Him daily, the One who has bought us with His precious blood. May our response always be to approach the Living Stone as a living sacrifice, ready to do His will.

1 Peter - Week 3, Day 4

Review

- Text 1 Peter 2:4-8
- Coming to Him as to a living stone - Christ the Cornerstone (Psalm 118:22-23)
- Rejected by man (tested and thrown out) (Matthew 22:43; Romans 11)
- Christ, the Living Stone is Choice and Precious to God (1 Peter 2:4)
- Believers are also living stones being built up into a spiritual house, a royal priesthood
- We have a High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:23-28) The perfect sacrifice
- We are to make spiritual sacrifices (Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15; Hebrews 13:16)
- We will not be disappointed (1 Peter 2:6)
- For those who reject Him, they fall headlong into eternal damnation (1 Peter 2:8)