

LIVING STONES

"Dying to self" - we know that must take place if we are to give God His rightful position as Lord of our life. He is to be our Master, as we have been bought with a precious price. If you have known Him long, you will know Him to be a gracious Master, for we have tasted the kindness of the Lord! If we could sit and chat, I'm sure we'd have many stories to tell of how God has shown up in our lives with His mercy, His love, His peace, time and again, because He is gracious to us, having both the ability and the desire to provide for us, He does, in both big and small ways, daily. What a great conversation that would be!

In yesterday's lesson of 1 Peter 2:1-3, we saw that since we, as believers, "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 as a baby longs for milk. The goal, Peter says, is to mature in our spiritual walk, which is a direct result of our allowing ourselves to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, as we learn and apply His Word to our lives. God has made every provision for us to flourish in our faith, but our cooperation and participation are necessary for our growth in our walk with Him. Let's set our minds and hearts to hear from Him today.

Today we look at 1 Peter 2:4-8, take a moment to read verses 1-8 to set context, and we'll begin.

Since we have "tasted the kindness of the Lord," the result is that we will want to focus on "coming to Him as to a living stone..." The phrase means to continuously participate in

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coming to Christ, and we both initiate the action to come to Him, as well as, we are affected by the result of coming to Him. Wouldn't you agree that's true? I know He has forever affected me, as I come to Him as to a living stone. Our Christ is not dead, He is alive.

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

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While God's plan to build us up on Christ "is marvelous in our eyes," we know there are those who have completely rejected Him.

Rejected. Each of us have probably felt the sting of rejection at some point in time. Wouldn't you agree that it's one of the worst emotions of all? No one likes rejection, and no one deserved it less than Jesus Christ, for He was blameless. Yet, even His own siblings rejected Him, and His own people.

The word rejected is *apodokimázein*, and is a form of the word which means, "to be tested," but this form of the word means, "to throw out in the test." When tested against what they expected their Messiah to be, the Jewish people threw Jesus out, rejecting the One who would be the very cornerstone of their faith, and nailed Him to a cross.

We're told in Matthew 22:43 that because of their rejection that another people would receive the kingdom of God. In Romans 11, it talks about how the Gentiles (those other than the Jews) were grafted in because of their faith, and those who rejected Christ were cut off.

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?

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He is Choice - elect. Planned for before the foundation of the world. And, Precious - held in high value by the Planner, because He knew it would be all that was needed to reconcile us to a right relationship with Him. The plan of His grace unfurled. The culmination of all He had prepared, in this "living stone."

Along with Christ, Believers are also called, "living stones." Out of response to Him we are to make it a matter of principle to continuously live designated "as living stones," who "are being built up as a spiritual house..." God has designed a spiritual house, Christ is the cornerstone and we are stones being built upon Him. That means, we have purpose.

What does the rest of the verse say we are being built up for?

1)

2)

This phrase 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.

Remember the definition of *holy* is *set apart for service*. The Old Testament gives us a clear picture of the service the priests were to accomplish, but the main aspect of a priest is that they had access to God. As Believers, we now have that personal access to God through Christ, our High Priest. If nothing else excites us, that should.

Read the following verses, and write what you see about our High Priest:

Hebrews 3:1-6

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Hebrews 4:14-16

Hebrews 5:5-10

Hebrews 7:23-28

We humans are weak, 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, He has things for us to do! We are to present spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God, but, take note, there is only one way that any of our "spiritual sacrifices" are acceptable to God, and that is through Christ Jesus (v.5). They are never acceptable by the works of our hands. Nor are they acceptable under our own terms.

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 grown on his own, and Abel brought what the Lord had asked of them, an animal sacrifice. The Lord accepted Abel's sacrifice but rejected Cain's. Why? Because Cain tried to present the works of his own hands. He had rejected the sacrifice God desired, and rejected the plan He had set forth. It was a lesson that any spiritual sacrifice we attempt must be through Christ Jesus, and completely by the direction of the Holy Spirit.

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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

In verses 6-8 we see that Christ, the cornerstone, will either be choice and precious, or He will be a stone of stumbling and offense." Those who reject Him will fall headlong into eternal damnation, of their own choice, because they refuse the gift of Christ. (We will look at this more tomorrow.)

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

What a sweet thought. Not disappointed. In a world full of disappointment there is One who will not disappoint. He is faithful and true. I believe it with all my heart. What about you? Are you like those 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)?

The choice is yours. Come to Him today, as to a living stone. Yourself being a living stone being built up into a spiritual house, for a holy priesthood.

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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 3:1-6; 4:14-16; 5:5-10; 7:23-28) 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)