

Women's Bible Study

May 12, 2021

1Peter 2:4-5 And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The *Olive Tree Bible App*, in its introduction of 1 Peter states, "The readers of the apostle Peter's letter were confused and discouraged by the persecution they were encountering because of their faith. Peter exhorted them to stand strong, repeatedly reminding them of Christ's example, the riches of their inheritance in Him, and the hope of His returning again to take them to heaven. Peter explained how Christians should respond when they suffer because of their beliefs".

Transport yourself to the time and culture this was written. The metaphor of 'Christ as a living stone' made sense to these Christians because they had previously placed their hope in elaborate stone temples of worship. Unlike a non-living object, Christ is the foundation of the church. Church is not a place, it is a person – Jesus Christ. He is not only life itself but gives life to all those who believe in Him. *Adam Clarke's Commentary* says Christ "is the source of life to all His followers, and that it is in union with Him that they live, ... the stones of a building are of not use but as they occupy their proper places in a building, and rest on the foundation".

The temple was the center of worship in the Jewish religion. It was where God was approached and sacrifices for the atonement of sin were made. In contrast to these magnificent stone temples, Peter reminds the converted Jews and others, that Jesus is the foundation of **living** faith, their source of spiritual life. The stones of a building have no use other than to support a structure, and once placed, the job is done. Christ offers a secure foundation, and life everlasting. Without Christ, there is no church.

All across the world, there are magnificent buildings erected to represent religion. St. Peters Basilica or the Vatican City is said to be the largest church covering over 110 acres. In the United States, the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York City is 121,000 square feet

with a roof height of 177 feet, (*source - Wikipedia*). However elaborate and beautiful these structures may be, they offer no special connection to a true lasting faith.

Jesus is the foundation of true saving faith. Read *William Burkitt's New Testament* notes, “the corner-stone supports the whole building, the church’s grace, the church’s peace, the church’s consolation, the church’s salvation, are all upheld and maintained by Him”.

Coming to Him by faith, those addressed were to throw off the way they used to act and instead seek to be transformed by God’s word. Christ was to be their strength and protection. “Christians are called “living stones”, not like the inanimate *things* of the material temple, but *living men* built up on Christ, the living and chief corner stone”, *The People’s Bible Encyclopedia 1924*.

Your focus at work, at home, at school, in relationships, those things you pursue, the importance you place upon worldly ideals, and your response to worldly thinking should be in great contrast to those who do not follow Christ. Although we may not suffer because of our faith as the audience Peter wrote to, there are choices we make that will set us apart, and in that context, friendships, family, and relationships are often affected. The exhortation remains the same – we are to worship Christ, to draw near to Him.

Stones make up a building which rests on a singular foundation for support. People make up a spiritual family which rests on Christ as their foundation and purpose. Christ gives spiritual life to all who believe in Him. “Like no earthly rock, He lives and gives life”, *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary*.

The beginning of 1 Peter 2:4 uses the phrase “and coming to Him”. The NAS translation reads, “As you come to Him”. These words denote a direction forward, towards Christ. The Christians being addressed can move towards God because He has called them to be alive in Him.

Hebrews 10:22, “Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled [clean] from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water”.

This relationship opens the door to approach and come near to Him in worship. Imagine how important this truth was to Peter’s audience for

encouragement as they found themselves rejected by others because of their faith. Peter reminds them that Christ was rejected by men, but chosen and precious in the sight of God. Men did not choose Christ, in fact, they scoffed at Him and eventually crucified Him.

John 1:11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

Luke 9:22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day."

Psalms 118:22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner [stone.]

Read Peter's testimony of Christ in Acts 4:11-12, "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, [but] WHICH BECAME THE VERY CORNER [stone.] "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone [for] the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes [in it] will not be disturbed.

Meditate on these truths for a moment. We have an incredible position in Christ because of God's love. In Christ, He has chosen you to be His child, forever to be alive in Him. These truths excite the heart to know all is well – regardless of outside circumstances and of how we might be perceived by others. Thousands of years ago, these same truths were used by the Apostle as a reminder to those who were struggling. And today, these truths continue to be an encouragement to stay the course. God's purpose and plan will not be thwarted!

"Men may rail at us, as they did at Him, but God has chosen us, and we are precious in His sight, even as Jesus is; hence we desire to live as consecrated persons, in whom God dwells, whose whole business is to present sacrifices unto the Lord", *Spurgeon Devotional Commentary*. In faith, we can approach God. "And coming to Him" is present tense. This is not our one time conversion but a daily coming to God as we exercise our faith and trust in Him.

- ♥ Do you continually seek God? How?
- ♥ What is your security? What is your strength?

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

1 Peter 2:5 continues with the metaphor of lively stones as a description of the believers being addressed. In the previous verse Christ is the living stone, a foundation offering life and hope. Because of Christ's death and resurrection, those who have trusted in Him have life and purpose. They are **being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

A **spiritual house** is quite different than a stone temple. The temple had been the center of worship and had offered a symbolic righteousness before God through elaborate sacrifices performed by priests. It was made of material which could be destroyed. A spiritual house is made of living persons, souls belonging to Christ. It is the church of God, built of living stones, upon the living foundation of Jesus. Stone upon stone a temple is built; Christ's church is built with the souls which are alive in Him.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Read the encouragement from Paul to the church at Ephesus, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner [stone], in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord", Ephesians 2:19-21.

A **holy priesthood** refers back to those men held in high esteem which offered sacrifices in the temple grounds. However, with Christ's finished work for the atonement for sin, He is our great high priest and "every Christian is in fact a priest, and is engaged in offering an acceptable sacrifice to God", (ref. Albert Barnes' NT Commentary).

Hebrews 4:14, Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

The intercession of Old Testament priests is no longer needed, the ultimate sacrifice has been offered and our transgressions paid in full.

Hebrews 9:12, and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Now each person who stands on the righteousness of Christ is in a sense a priest, offering daily sacrifices of worship.

Revelation 1:6, and He has made us [to be] a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him [be] the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Spiritual sacrifices, rather than the blood of animals, are now offered to God through Jesus, with a heart of thanksgiving and worship. Christ's death and resurrection were the ultimate sacrifice, no other atonement for sin is needed. A believer is part of God's family, his spiritual house, and is to live according to God's word, offering all to Him as worship.

"The proper idea of a priest is one who offers sacrifice; but the ministers of the New Testament have no sacrifices to offer--the one great and perfect oblation for the sins of the world having been made by the Redeemer on the cross", *Albert Barnes' NT Commentary*. Our sacrifice is not one of atonement for sin as it was in the Old Testament, since the full price has been paid in Christ. Instead, we offer sacrifice of worship, only acceptable through Christ as our intercessor, in living a holy life. Those who believe in Him have been created for a purpose – **to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ**.

Romans 12:1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, [which is] your spiritual service of worship.

1Corinthians 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Hebrews 13:15-16 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

We are to 'offer up' <anaphero>, to take up, to bear, to bring, to give our lives as a sacrifice of praise to God. Our greatest example is Christ. The Apostle explains this further along in 1 Peter 2:21-24.

Look again at Hebrews 13:15-16. A spiritual sacrifice, instead of being an outward act, begins from within. Our entire self is to be surrendered to God. This means our will is given up for His; God is on the throne as we live for Him. We push sin away and resist the pull of our fleshly passions. With our lips we offer praise – words of thanksgiving to God. I wonder how many of us are quite willing to speak of God at church, in a Bible study, or with those we know are like minded. But our lips close to the things of God when there might be a price to pay, when we fear what others may think of us. We readily talk of our interests, our families, and our work. We often boldly share our opinions and our thoughts, but when it comes to speaking Truth publicly, we often remain silent.

- ♥ Do you confess your hope of Christ?
- ♥ What is the fruit of your lips?
- ♥ Are we willing to loudly sing our praise to God in a worship service or alone at home but then leave our worship where it is comfortable?

The KJV of Hebrews 13:16 is rendered, **“But to do good and to communicate forget not”**. We are to meet the needs of the ‘one-another’s’. We are to speak of God’s praise continually. In *Alexander Maclaren’s Expositions of Holy Scripture* for 1 Peter 2:5, he makes these statements worthy of thought – “your praying and singing praises are worse than useless unless you go out into the world an embodiment and an imitation of the love which you hymn”, ... “Do not talk about being the priests of the Most High God unless you are doing the priestly office of representing God to men, and carrying to them the blessings that they need. Your service to God is worthless unless it is followed by diligent, fraternal, wise, self-sacrificing service for men”, (biblehub.com).

1Peter 4:11 Whoever speaks, [let him speak,] as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, [let him do so] as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- ♥ Do we serve Christ in holiness and righteousness?
- ♥ Do we offer the spiritual sacrifices of a broken heart and contrite spirit? Of thanksgiving and praise?
- ♥ Do we daily come to Christ, in faith, seeking to serve Him for His glory?

A priest is one who is engaged in the holy service of God. A priest offers worship to God. Today, we think of priests as those who have the authority to perform religious rituals and fulfill the duties of a particular religion. However, all those who have bowed before Jesus as their Lord and Savior are engaged in the holy service of God and are set apart to offer their lives as worship to Him.

1Peter 2:9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR [God's] OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Psalms 51:15-17 O Lord, open my lips, That my mouth may declare Thy praise. For Thou dost not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; Thou art not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

Look again at 1 Peter 2:4. Christ was rejected by men **but choice and precious in the sight of God**. If you know Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you have been chosen by the God of the universe, the God of all things created, visible and invisible, to bring glory to His name.

John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and [that] your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.

Ephesians 1:4-6, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself,

according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

We are inexpressibly precious and valuable because we were created to bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. This is difficult to comprehend, knowing our weakness to sin, yet it is true. The words of the hymn “And Can it Be” by *Charles Wesley*, come to mind:

*“And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior’s blood?
Died He for me who caused His pain – For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be, that Thou, my God, shouldst die for Me?”*

Ephesians 2:4-10 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly [places], in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, [it is] the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

It is all too easy to answer the questions asked previously with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’. I can personally slide my way out of total honesty by doing so. In order to avoid this, I have to answer questions that require a heartfelt explanation on my part. If I answer yes, then I must be able to explain how. If I answer no, then I must be willing to consider change. Readdress the same questions above, asking ‘How?’.

- ♥ **How do you serve Christ in holiness and righteousness?**
- ♥ **How do you offer the spiritual sacrifices of a broken heart and contrite spirit? Of thanksgiving and praise?**
- ♥ **How do you daily come to Christ, in faith, seeking to serve Him for His glory?**

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.