



“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,” I Peter 2:5.

Living Stones

Lesson Aim: To help the believer to accept God's purpose for his life.

L280. Date: August 1971. **Text:** I Peter 2:1-12.

Topic: Christ: Nature of; Church: Nature of:

INTRODUCTION - Today, the lesson is built around a lovely picture. Let your mind draw a scene of beauty in which there is set a lovely brick church. Its appearance appeals to the beholder to enter and worship God. It is a fitting testimony to the Lord of heaven and earth Who is worshipped there. It stands as a lighthouse in the area.

This is the picture of today's lesson. But the building here is a spiritual building. It is not made up of brick, but of believers. It has no foundation of concrete and steel, because Jesus Christ is its foundation. It is a spiritual house built of God for His indwelling and for a testimony of the gospel to the world.

This symbolism is not unique to today's lesson text. Ephesians 2:20-22 reads, **“And (you believers) are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”**

Your local congregation of Christians, being a true New Testament church, is the spiritual building to which Peter and Paul refers! God is at work through the Holy Spirit building and strengthening it by the addition to the church of those who are being saved. Thus He is adding “living stones” to the spiritual house.

Today's study aims "to help the believer to accept God's purpose for his life." This is applicable to all areas but especially to your relationship to the church. As you study, examine your faithfulness to the Lord's church where He has set you. Only thus will you be a "living stone" in the spiritual building which truly glorifies God. As each believer fills his place assigned of God, the spiritual life and witness of the church will be enlarged and God will be glorified. God has decreed, **"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen,"** Ephesians 3:21.

EXPOSITION

1. THE LIVING STONES,

Jesus Christ is the Chief Corner Stone in God's spiritual building. Believers in Christ make up the lesser stones of the superstructure. Verses 1-5 describes the lesser stones (Christian believers) and verses 6-8 describe the Chief Corner Stone (Jesus). Here is what God expects Christians to be as they are "lesser stones" in His building.

1. By nature, they shun sin, verse 1. The Bible calls for believers to "lay aside" the former sins in which they reveled before they knew Christ. This means they would "put away once-for-all such things. By an act of the will they are to renounce all the hidden things of darkness and live as children of light.

Salvation does not immune the believer against temptation. Neither does it guarantee that he will never sin again. Those things, which are found in the life, that are contrary to the new nature Christ gives are to be put away. They are "put off" in the sense that one changes his garments. Christ changes the whole habit of one's soul.

Look at the list of things to be put away. "Malice" is that malignity which rejoices in the misfortunes of others. "Guile" is trickery and deceit. "Hypocrisy" is pretending to be what one is not. "All evil speakings" refers to the sins of the tongue studied in an earlier lesson this quarter. These things are contrary to the divine nature which is in the believer (II Peter 1:4) and must be put away forever.

2. By desire, they delight in God's Word, verse 2. A newborn baby will cry with all his strength when hunger pains are present. Just so should the believer as a "living stone" in God's spiritual house cry out for the nourishment of God's Word.

The Bible is food for the soul. It calls itself food, milk, honey—food to

eat, milk to drink, and honey for desert. It is a balanced diet! No wonder the believer finds a hunger in his soul for the Word of God. When this desire is ignored or neglected a warped and deformed spiritual life results.

Those who are “living stones” in God's spiritual house should yearn for the sustenance of the “spiritual food” in God's Word.

3. By experience, they know the Lord is good, verses 3-4. God's people of every generation have testified to this truth. The Psalmist wrote, **“O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him,”** Psalm 34:8.

Taste suggests personal appropriation. To taste a thing one must come in personal contact with it. Those who have tasted—come into a personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ—know by experience that God is good. Others may reject Him but those who have met Him personally know that Jesus is “chosen of God, and precious.”

4. By mission, they perform a spiritual service, verse 5. Believers are “built” into God's spiritual house. This is the same word which Jesus used when He said, **“... Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,”** Matthew 16:18. What a holy privilege to be set in the church by God.

This is not a passive position believers fill there. In God's house there are sacrifices to present and services to perform. Thus Peter speaks of believers as a “holy priesthood.” Clad in the garments of holiness and love, believers offer up the “spiritual sacrifices” which please God. **“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name,”** Hebrews 13:15. Are you delighted to have such a privilege? Are you faithful in service?

II. THE CHIEF CORNER STONE, 2:6-8.

1. God has set Jesus as the Chief Corner Stone of the church, verse 6. Long before God's Son came in human flesh, prophets foretold that He would be the foundation stone for believing men. Reference is made to the “stone” by Jacob (Genesis 29:24), Moses (Deuteronomy 32:4), David (Psalm 62:1-2, 6), Isaiah (Isaiah 28:16), and Daniel (Daniel 2:44, 45).

Divine revelation has made it plain that Jesus Christ, the virgin-born Son of God, is the Rock Who is become the Head of the corner. **“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,”** I Corinthians 3:11

2. God set Jesus Christ as the Chief Corner Stone for our sake, verse 6b. He is elect, precious, chief of the corner. As men rest upon Him and find

His sufficiency guaranteeing their security, He becomes especially precious to them.

He who believes in Jesus shall never have cause for being ashamed: he shall not be confounded. Those who reject Him will some day be put to shame when they see their tragic mistake. But the “living stones” in God's house will never suffer so.

3. Those built upon the Chief Corner Stone recognize that He is precious, verse 7. Unbelievers often admire His devotion; they marvel at His teachings; they wonder at His power; they stand amazed at His resurrection and His ascension. But He is not precious to them. He is precious to the believer! No one can recognize His preciousness unless he trusts Him as personal Saviour.

“Not only is Jesus precious to us, as our beloved and friend, but His worth and beauty in the mind of God are passed on to us who believe; so that our dull common nature flashes in the excellence of His loveliness. . . Iron touches magnetized iron and becomes magnetic. Stones touch **the Stone** and become Jewels.”—F. B. Meyer. There is an exquisite delight in learning of the Lord Jesus as the precious One as we love Him more.

4. The Chief Corner Stone has been rejected by men, verse 7. **“He came unto his own (things), and his own (people) received him not,”** John 1:11.

How foolish men become in their sin. Though the Stone is readily available for men to build upon Him, the builders proceed without Him. Some admire Him while others criticize Him, but they continue to build without Him. “Disallowed indeed of men!”

Jesus told of the tragic results of building a house without sufficient foundation, Matthew 7:24-27. Men reject the Stone provided of God and they will suffer much for it. How much better to be a living stone in God's spiritual house, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, Ephesians 2:20.

5. Though rejected by men, the Chief Corner Stone is exalted of God, verses 7-8. Builders rejected the Stone which was God's choice! Though smitten by men, He was elect of God. Though rejected by men, He was chosen of God. Though unworthy to men, He is precious to God. How differently God sees than man sees.

Jesus is the Stone. He will be the foundation stone upon which one's life is based or He will be a stone over which one will stumble. He is a foundation stone or a rock of offence. The same Person who is now a foundation stone will one day be a stone of judgment. Men will be

foundationed on that Stone or they will be destroyed by it. To rebel against God is to face a dread penalty.

III. THE SPIRITUAL HOUSE, 2:9-12.

1. The house is spiritual and holy, verse 9. Those who make up that spiritual house are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.”

Believers are “a chosen generation” (an elect race) in that they are chosen of God unto salvation that they may share the news of Jesus with others. They are “a royal priesthood” because they have been constituted kings and priests of God (Revelation 1:6), going in before God to worship and going out before men to serve them in His name. They are “a holy nation” in that they are the spiritual Israel through which God is now doing His work in the world. They are “a peculiar people” in that they are God's own possession. What a privilege to be all this in Christ Jesus and for His sake.

2. God places the saved into this “spiritual house” for a particular purpose, verse 9b. “. . . **That ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.**”

God wants believers to show forth His praises. The change from heathenism unto Christianity is described as deliverance from darkness. In this change the believer becomes a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, Colossians 1:12.

How can believers ever repay the Lord for His grace? Peter answers, “Show forth his praise.” How? By word, conduct, attitude let Jesus be seen in your life. When God saved us He had more in mind than just to keep us from hell and get us into heaven. He saves us “. . . that we should be to the praise of his glory. . .” Ephesians 1:12. This is why He set us in the spiritual house.

How about your daily life? What did you do today that you would not have done if you had not been a Christian? Is God really glorified in you?

3. God places believers in an exalted position in His spiritual house, verse 10. He chose enemies and aliens as His own people! Hosea foretold a time when those who were not a people of God would be adopted and those

who had received no mercy would obtain sufficient mercy to care for their sins, Hosea 2.

Think of it: God extended mercy to rebellious sinners and made them His own children! How can any man who names the name of Jesus Christ keep such good news to himself? Every person should have opportunity to hear. Evangelistic and missionary efforts must be redoubled many times over. Every sinner must hear. Every believer must tell.

4. God places a two-fold challenge before those who are living stones in His spiritual house, verses 11-12,

(1) Believers must “abstain from fleshly lusts,” verse 11. Lust refers to those grosser sins of the flesh which fight against the believer's spiritual fervor and condemns his influence among men. Just as Amalek came out and fought against the newly-freed Israelites as they left Egypt (Exodus 17:8), so these carnal desires tend to turn believers from the path of devotion to Christ.

Lust is inordinate desires—the desire for too much of a good thing or the desire for any part of a bad thing. These lusts “war against the soul” like an army marches against a city. A battle is engaged each day. Submission to the lusts of the flesh will harm the inner man—the “soul”—not necessarily the body.

Submission to temptation weakens the inner man. Be warned. Learn the blessed grace of self-control. Trust God to aid in the midst of trial, I Corinthians 10:13. Here is the rule: “. . . **Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh,**” Galatians 5:16.

(2) Believers should adorn their profession by upright conduct, verse 12. The Christian faith is blasphemed when a believer lives unworthy. It is adorned when a man lives according to his new life in Christ.

Howard W. Ferrin tells of a certain church member who was always first to testify in church but whose life outside was shameful. On one occasion he arose and with great fervor proclaimed, “Praise the Lord, I'm standing on His promises.” Whereupon a boot maker, who was not a Christian, stood up in the back of the building and said, “No, you're not. You're standing in the boots which I made for you and for which you have not yet paid me.”

The believer should so live that, even though someone may speak of him as an evildoer, no one would believe it. On the contrary, your upright life would cause them to glorify God. This is why God saved us, Ephesians 1:12. Let each person bear witness to the world that he has been with Jesus, Acts 4:13.

CONCLUSION—God has saved you for a purpose. There is a place for you in the spiritual building which He is erecting for His glory. Each believer should take his place in the local church and serve God there.

He should so conduct himself in daily living that men may see Jesus in him. He should bear witness to Jesus that others may also be built upon the “sure foundation” likewise and become “living stones” in God's spiritual house. This is the grandest goal in living.

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit,”
Ephesians 2:19-22.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the “living stones”?
2. In what building do they go?
3. What sacrifices do they offer up?
4. Who is the Chief Corner Stone?
5. What if one rejects that Stone?
6. What is God's purpose in our salvation?
7. What is lust?
8. What should be the believer's attitude toward lust?
9. Why did God save you?
10. Why is it so important for Christians to live upright lives?