



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

Christian Conduct

Lesson Aim: to encourage believers to seek and follow God’s will for their lives

L345. Date: July 1976. **Text:** I Peter 2:1-12.

Topic: Christianity: Meaning of; Church: Nature of.

There is something strange about being a Christian. (1) It is strange how one becomes a Christian — by being born anew of the Spirit of God. (2) It is strange what one leaves behind when he becomes a Christian — guilt and judgment on sin. (3) It is strange how easy it is to become a Christian — by repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ. (4) It is strange how life is changed when one becomes a Christian — he no longer enjoys living in sin, but desires to live so as to please God. (5) It is strange how relationship with God is changed when one becomes a Christian — no longer God's enemy, but then God's child.

Today's lesson reviews some of the strange (as they appear to the world) aspects of the Christian life. It aims to help Christians to find and to follow God's will for their lives.

Why is the Christian life strange to natural man? The natural man is without Christ. He cannot comprehend spiritual things (I Corinthians 2:9-16). He who receives Jesus Christ receives also the Holy Spirit who comes to live in him, teaching him the things of God. It is not strange to the believer that he is a Christian. It is the most logical and important thing in the world. The reason for the change is simple: Believers “**. . . have the mind of Christ,**” I Corinthians 2:16. Consider the privilege of being a Christian.

I. A STRANGE DISCIPLINE (2:1, 11)

The Christian life is a disciplined life. The fleshly nature does not die when one receives Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. It keeps raising its ugly head and trying to express itself in sinful acts and attitudes. The faithful Christian should be done with all evil and deceit, all pretense (insincerity, hypocrisy), and jealousy, and slander of every kind.

Sin exercised itself in the body before one came to Christ. It should no longer be permitted to do so. By an act of the will, the believer should once-for-all put away the hidden things of darkness and live as a child of light. As one changes clothing by “putting off” the soiled and “putting on” the clean, so should the whole habit of one's life be changed by Christ. He should be done forever with those things which are contrary to the new nature that Christ has given him.

What things are to be put away? Examine the list. “Malice” is that vicious spirit which rejoices when others suffer. “Guile” is trickery and deceit. “Hypocrisy” is pretending to be what one is not. “Evil speaking” includes all sins of the tongue.

Why put them away? They are contrary to the divine nature which is implanted in the believer. All that does not agree with the nature of God should be put away by the Christian.

There is another great reason why sinful acts and attitudes should be put out of the believer's life: “. . . They war against your soul,” Peter warned (verse 11). The inner man (the soul) is injured when sin is permitted to have control of one's life.

Conversion does not make one sinless. Neither does it make him immune to temptation. Fleshly lusts carry on an unceasing warfare against the believer's higher spiritual interests. He will be tempted, but he can have victory. “. . . **Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh,**” Galatians 5:16.

II. A STRANGE DESIRE (2:2, 3)

Instead of craving the temporary satisfactions of sensual desires by indulging in sin, the Christian is to crave the permanent satisfaction of his spiritual man by receiving the Word of God (verse 2). As an infant cries with all his strength when he is hungry, so the Christian should yearn for the satisfying “milk of the Word” which is found in the Holy Bible.

The Bible provides spiritual food. It is “meat” to eat, “milk” to drink, and “honey” for desert! It is a balanced diet which will keep one in spiritual

health. Jesus said of the Scriptures, “. . . **They . . . testify of me,**” John 5:39. One who meets Jesus in salvation desires to know Him better and better. It is natural, therefore, for him to turn to the Book that testifies of Him. One who neglects the Bible indicates that He does not love Jesus.

What does it mean to “taste” and see that the Lord is good (verse 3)? (See Psalm 34:8.) In order to taste, one must come into personal contact and receive a thing. To taste the Lord means to receive Him. All who have received the Lord can testify that He is good in grace.

A hungry man who tastes of delicious food is not satisfied with a mere taste. He wants to eat until he satisfies the hunger of his body. A repenting man who “tastes” of the Lord Jesus is not satisfied merely with the initial conversion experience. He wants to know Jesus better and to grow to full spiritual maturity in Him. He, therefore, longs with earnest desire (as an infant cries for his milk) for the “milk of the Word” that he might know Jesus better. Loss of appetite is an indication of illness.

How is your spiritual health as indicated by your desire for the Word of God?

III. A STRANGE RELATIONSHIP (20:4-7)

Men live in houses. God lives in a house also. God does not live in a house made of brick and mortar, however. His is a spiritual house made up of spiritual men. Peter expressed the truth: “**Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house . . . acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,**” verse 5. What a privilege it is for one to be a part of the house in which God lives!

What is His “spiritual house”? The concept of a spiritual house is applied to the local congregation of Christians (Ephesians 2:19-22). Believers are built together upon the foundation of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone. In Christ “each individual building” (each particular congregation) grows unto a holy temple in the Lord.

(NOTE: The **King James Version** translates Ephesians 2:21 as “. . . all the building . . .” growing unto an holy temple. So do most other translations. The grammatical structure of the Greek text [as originally written by Peter] does not teach that all believers form one great temple of God. It speaks in terms of the congregation of Christians and declares that “each [separate, individual] building” forms God's holy temple. God's intention for each church is that she would grow “unto an holy temple in the Lord.”)

Christians, gathered in local churches, form God's holy temples. That is not all, however. They are not only the temple of God, they are the priests

who minister in that temple. **“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,”** verse 5.

How can Christians be the temple and, at the same time, be God's priests who minister in that temple? Reference is to spiritual, not material, things. The house of God is not a lifeless structure of brick and mortar. It is made up of believers who are living stones, whose arrangement with other believers is to provide an organism through which God can work.

Jesus is the “chief corner stone” of God's holy temple of believers, His ministry as chief corner stone is not static; it is dynamic. A Christian is not a good member of God's “spiritual house” when he does nothing. It is as he serves that God is pleased with him. It is not enough for one to be a member of a church; he should be an active, serving member. He should be like Jesus.

Each “living stone” is transformed by contact with the “chief corner stone.” **“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious . . .”** verse 7. Many who do not believe recognize the uniqueness of Jesus. They admire His devotion. They marvel at His teaching. They wonder at His power. They stand amazed at His resurrection and ascension. He is not precious to them, however. He is precious only to believers.

“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.

IV. A STRANGE REFUSAL (2:7, 8)

Some look upon Jesus as one who is precious. Others look upon Him as unworthy of serious consideration. To the former, He is the chief corner stone — the Head of the corner. To the latter — He is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. Why the difference? The former have “tasted” of Him; they know Him personally. The latter “stumble at the word, being disobedient;” they declare the Stone to be of no value. How precious is Jesus to you?

How strange that men would turn from Jesus. A great Christian leader, who has traveled in most countries of the world and talked with many leaders in political and religious areas, made a surprising report. “I have asked thousands of people — Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, atheists, communists — ‘Who is the greatest person who has ever lived? Who has

done the greatest good for mankind?’ Every knowledgeable person I have ever encountered who has had the opportunity to investigate the evidence has answered. ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Not all have received Him as their Saviour, but the problem has been one of the will rather than of the intellect, for the facts concerning who the Lord Jesus is and what He has accomplished, are clear for all men to see” — Dr. Bill Bright. Why do men hesitate to come to Jesus? Dr. Bright correctly evaluated the problem: Men do not come to Jesus because they do not want to come.

How foolish men are in their sin. Builders “disallowed” (rejected, counted as unusable) Him whom God had chosen as the Chief Corner Stone. Smitten by men, He is elect of God. Rejected by men, He is chosen of God. Thought useless by men, He is precious to God. How differently God sees than man sees!

“He came unto his own (things), and his own (people) received him not,” John 1:11.

The sinner's refusal to receive Jesus Christ is not merely strange; it is tragic, Jesus said “**. . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me,**” John 14:6. Those who knew Jesus best testified, “**Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,**” Acts 4:12. A man condemns himself when he rejects God's offer in Jesus Christ.

V. A STRANGE PRIVILEGE (2:9-12)

What a rare privilege is enjoyed by the believer. He is, with other believers, “**. . . a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people . . .**” (1) As “a chosen generation,” believers are an elect race whose privilege it is to know and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. (2) As “a royal priesthood,” believers can go before God in worship and before men to serve. (3) As “a holy nation,” believers are the spiritual Israel through whom God is doing His work in the world. (4) As “a peculiar people,” believers are God's personal possession. What a blessed privilege it is for a believer to be all that in Christ!

What is the goal of the Christian's life and service? The Apostle Peter answered, “**. . . That ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,**” verse 9. The reason God saved men is that they might be “**. . . to the praise of his glory . . .**” Ephesians 1:12.

How can the believer show forth God's praises? Jesus is to be seen in

his life through his word, conduct, and attitude. **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,”** Matthew 5:16.

Through the prophet Hosea, God foretold of a time when He would take those who were not His people and make them the people of God. That time has come. **“... When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ...”** Romans 5:10. **“... Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ,”** Ephesians 2:13.

The Christian's privilege is to tell others how they can know Jesus Christ personally. A survey made among thousands of college students revealed that eighty-nine percent of them did not know how one becomes a Christian. That is why God has left Christians in the world — to tell others how to receive Christ as personal Saviour and Lord.

God has saved you, if you have trusted Jesus as Saviour. God has placed you as a “living stone” in His spiritual building, if you are obedient to Jesus as Lord. Thank God for your privileges in Christ. Commit yourself to serve Him who saved you and commissioned you in service.

You became a Christian when you received Jesus as Saviour. You act like a Christian when you obey Jesus as Lord. Both the Saviourhood and the Lordship of Jesus are essential for a life of Christian service in which God is glorified. Christian brother, be what you have become in Christ!

Questions

1. In what way is it strange for one to be a Christian?
2. How does I Corinthians 2:9-16 reflect that strangeness?
3. What things should be put out of the Christian's life?
4. Why should sin be put away?
5. How can you cultivate an appetite for the Word of God?
6. What is the “spiritual house” of which Peter wrote?
7. According to verse 5 what privileges are yours?
8. In what way is Jesus precious to believers?
9. Why would anyone reject Jesus Christ?
10. What do I Peter 2:9, Ephesians 1:12, Matthew 5:16 mean?