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“LIVING STONES”

1 PETER 2:4-10

Introduction

1. Do you ever find yourself losing sight of who you are?
2. Has the world in which we live flooded you with so much which it says is urgent that you have lost sight of what is truly important?
3. More and more, the culture in which we live is pushing the Christian faith to the fringe.
4. It is much easier to follow Christ when those around us uphold the same values and beliefs as ourselves.
5. But what do you do when you are in the minority?
6. I spoke at a funeral recently in which one of the children told me of a time when he was in a middle school class in another state:
 - a. The teacher spent a good bit of time teaching on evolution.
 - b. When the teacher had finished, he asked the class to divide up.
 - c. Those who still believed in creation were to stand on one side of the classroom.
 - d. Those who now believed in evolution were to stand on the other side of the classroom.
 - e. This young boy, who is now my age, said that only he and two other students stood on the side of the classroom designated for those who still believed that God created our world.
 - f. He also indicated that some of his fellow students questioned why he still believed as he did.
7. In his letter to the Christians of Asia Minor, the apostle Peter wrote to Christians who were struggling under persecution.
8. Peter’s goal in his letter is to encourage these struggling Christians.

- a. He has encouraged them to remain alert in their faith, as they fixed their hope on that which was to be brought to them at Christ's return.
 - b. He has reminded them of the reward which awaits them in heaven.
 - c. He has told them to live holy lives and to drink deeply from the pure milk of God's Word.
9. Now, his mind drifts back to some things which he remembered Jesus saying. e reminds them of God's estimation of them and what He is doing through their lives.
10. In Matthew 16, the apostle Matthew tells us of a little retreat that Jesus took His disciples to a city, about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, known as Caesarea Philippi.
- a. There He asked them, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Matthew 16:13).
 - b. They responded with, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (Matthew 16:14, ESV).
 - c. He then asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" (v. 15).
 - d. Peter responded, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16).
 - e. After telling Peter that this had not been revealed to him by any human source, but by His heavenly Father, Jesus said, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:18).
11. No doubt, Peter remembered these words and a few others as he wrote about *the* "living stone" and ourselves as "living stones" as he encourages us in our lives as Christians.

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I. Jesus Christ Is . . .

"And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God," (1 Peter 2:4, NASB95)

A. THE STONE

1. He is the foundation upon which we can build our lives.
2. When you or I build a house or any other building, we want to make sure the foundation is solid, because everything else rests upon it.
3. Many of us have heard of the "Leaning Tower of Pisa"
 - a. It has a nearly four-degree lean.
 - b. It leans because of an unstable foundation.
4. The Millennium Tower in San Francisco is the city's third-tallest skyscraper.
 - a. It was built in 2008.
 - b. As of four years ago, it had sunk 18 inches and tilted 14 inches.
5. As with physical foundations, so it is with the spiritual foundation upon which our lives are built.
6. Some people attempt to build their lives upon their wealth, the family name, connections, abilities, physical qualities.
7. What happens to your life when these are no more?
8. Jesus Christ is the only solid foundation both now and into eternity.
9. If you put your trust in Him, you "will not be disappointed" (v. 6).

Slide 3**B. THE LIVING STONE**

1. Jesus is not just "the stone," He is "the living stone."
2. He died for our sins and was raised from the dead, triumphing over sin and death.
3. As he told the woman beside the well outside the city of Sychar, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (John 4:10, NASB95).

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4. As He told Martha, the sister of Lazarus, following her brother's death, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he

dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die” (John 11:25-26, NASB95).

5. When He appeared to the apostle John on the island of Patmos in His glorified form, He said, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore” (Revelation 1:17,18, NASB95).
6. Because He lives forevermore, He is able to give eternal life to those of us who believe in Him (v. 6).
7. However, to receive such life, you and I must continually “come to Him.”
 - a. Initially, we came to Him in our obedience to the truth — it was at that time we were “born again to a living hope” through His resurrection from the dead (1:3).
 - b. Now we keep coming to Him in worship and prayer.
8. We must be willing to build everything in our lives on who He is and what He has done for us through His own death and resurrection.

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9. Many of us are familiar with the words of a hymn written in 2002 by Nichole Nordeman, which she titled “You Are My All In All.”

You are my strength when I am weak
You are the treasure that I seek
You are my all in all
Seeking You as a precious jewel
Lord, to give up I'd be a fool
You are my all in all

10. Is Jesus your “all in all?” Have you come to Him that you might have life?

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C. CHOSEN AND PRECIOUS IN GOD’S SIGHT

1. What do we mean when we say that someone is “chosen”?
 - a. He or she is “the object of choice”?
 - b. They have been “selected or marked for favor or special privilege”
2. And if we say that this individual is “the object of choice” . . .

- a. Do we not mean that such a person was “selected with care”?
 - b. That he or she is “preferred” above others?
3. So Jesus, as God’s Son, was God’s “choice” when it came to our salvation.
 4. As Peter, himself, would testify before the Sanhedrin when he and John were questioned about their preaching in Jesus’ name,

“He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief 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.” (Acts 4:11–12, NASB95)
 5. Not only was our Lord “chosen” by God, He is also “precious” to Him.
 6. What do we as parents mean when we say that our children are precious to us?
 - a. Do we not cherish them?
 - b. Are they not dear to us, highly esteemed by us?
 7. When it comes to our Savior, the One who saves us from our sins, He upon whom we can build our lives, no one else will do.
 8. Only Jesus holds such “precious value” (v. 7).

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II. There Are Two Different Responses and Outcomes To God’s Choice Stone

A. FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE

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“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. For this is contained in Scripture: “Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.” This precious value, then, is for you who believe” (1 Peter 2:5–7a, NASB95)

1. Those of us “who believe” in Jesus Christ as God’s “choice stone,” His “precious corner stone” have purified our souls through our obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1:22).
2. We have been “born again to a living hope” through our Lord’s resurrection from the dead (1 Peter 1:3).
3. Now, God considers us “living stones.”
4. We are each a part of His new temple, His “spiritual house,” which He is building.
 - a. It is not a building made with any perishable materials like gold, silver, wood or stone.
 - b. Instead it is being built with the imperishable qualities of faith and holiness.
5. Under the law of Moses the only way to approach God was through the priests who served in the temple.
6. Under this law only those people who were descendants of Aaron were able to be God’s priests.
7. Today, because of what Christ has done on the cross, every Christian is a priest, and is able to draw near to God.
8. As priests of God, we offer spiritual sacrifices which are made acceptable to God through Jesus Christ:
 - a. We present our bodies as “a living and holy sacrifice” to God for His service (Romans 12:1).
 - b. We give of our means for the spread of the gospel (Philippians 4:18).
 - c. Through our singing, we “offer up a sacrifice of praise to God” (Hebrews 13:15).
 - d. Our “doing good and sharing” with others are sacrifices with which “God is pleased” (Hebrews 13:16).

Slide 9**B. FOR THOSE WHO DISBELIEVE**

“but for those who disbelieve, “The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone,” and, “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.” (1 Peter 2:7b–8, NASB95)

1. Those who disbelieve reject Jesus.
2. They reject Him because they are disobedient to God’s word.
3. The apostle John tells us of one occasion when Jesus was in Jerusalem for one of the feasts:
 - a. The Jews were seeking to kill Him because, in their minds, He was not only “breaking the Sabbath,” but also “making Himself equal with God” by “calling God His Father” (John 5:18).
 - b. At one point He said to them, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life” (John 5:39-40).
4. Because they are disobedient to the message of the word, they stumble.
5. They forfeit all the hope of sharing Christ’s honor and preciousness before His Father.

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III. Our New Position And Opportunity In Christ

A. IN CHRIST, WE ARE . . .

1. “A Chosen Race”
 - a. Formerly, it was the descendants of Israel (Jacob) who were the chosen and elect of God.
 - b. Now, however, God has selected a new family through whom to work in the world.
 - c. Our bonds are spiritual, not physical.

10a

2. “A Royal Priesthood”
 - a. Christ, our High Priest, is now reigning over His kingdom (Acts 2:30-31)
— He is “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Revelation 17:14).
 - b. God has raised us up with Christ through our baptism, and seated us with Him in the heavenly realm (Ephesians 2:4-6).
 - c. As John wrote in Revelation 1:6, Christ “has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.”

10b

3. “A Holy Nation”
 - a. We are a people who have been set apart from the world to serve our God.
 - b. There are no geographical boundaries to which anyone may point.
 - c. No, God’s “holy nation” of which we are a part includes “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” (Revelation 7:9).
 - d. You and I have brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world.

10c

4. “A People For God’s Own Possession”
 - a. As Christians, you and I now belong to God in a way that others do not.
 - b. We have been purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28).
 - c. Not only does God now claim us as His own, He guards us and preserves us for Himself.

Slide 11**B. OUR NEW BENEFITS IN CHRIST MOTIVATE US TO PRAISE GOD**

“... so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;” (1 Peter 2:9, NASB95)

1. God alone is worthy.
2. Our salvation is not the result of what we have done, but what He has

done.

3. To declare God's excellencies is to speak of all that God is and has done.
4. We constantly sing God's praises, but do we speak of God's goodness and blessings in our own lives.

Conclusion

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“for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

(1 Peter 2:10, NASB95)

1. There was a time when we were not God's people, but now, because of Christ's death for our sins, we who are Christians are a part of God's family — we are His people.
2. There was also a time when we “had not received mercy.”
3. Instead, because we gratified the cravings of our sinful nature and followed its desires, we were objects of His wrath (Ephesians 2:3).
4. **But, because God is “rich in mercy” and “because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, [He] made us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4-6, NASB95).**
5. Do you belong to God today? Have you received His mercy?
6. If not, why not do so now.