

4 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,5 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.

Peter in this part of the letter has told us that our growth as believers and as incurable lovers of Christ is directly linked to our intake of the word the word of God.

v.2 says, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

If we have had a genuine conversion by the grace of God to become a disciple of Christ then we have tasted of the kindness of the Lord. Our salvation by grace comes from the kindness of God.

Let me review what we learned in our last study.

"Long for the spiritual milk, since you've tasted the kindness of the Lord. We are commanded to long for it. So which is it: the milk of the word (NASB)? Or is it the milk of God's kindness?"

But there doesn't have to be a contradiction. Where did the readers taste the kindness of the Lord? The answer is: in the gospel, the word of God (v. 25). They were born again by that kindness through the word of God. So the spiritual milk is the kindness of the Lord experienced through the word of God. Or you could say, the spiritual milk is the word of God revealing or transmitting the kindness of the Lord."

You were born again by that word namely, by the powerful kindness of God in that word, and now go on longing for that word and for the day by day experience tasting of the kindness of the Lord through his word.

If the word of God is powerful enough to create new Christians (through new birth), then the word of God is powerful enough to create desire in languishing Christian souls. Don't retreat from that truth. The power at work within you just to bring you to life is like the power that raises the dead (Eph. 1:19-20). Can it not create desire just like it created you. Trust it.

Peter's point is: don't think that they can flourish in the same heart. Desire to taste and enjoy God's kindness cannot flourish where in the same heart with guile and hypocrisy. So fight to destroy the desires of guile and hypocrisy; and fight to taste the kindness of the Lord in his word.

The result will be (v. 2b) "you will grow in respect to salvation." Literally: "you will grow into salvation." Salvation is reached by growth. To be sure, God gives the growth (1:5; 1 Cor. 3:6).

But growth is necessary. Do not say, "I can't grow; I can't change; and I don't need to." Throw that idea away and seek God with all your heart for help in desiring His word for He is working to will and to do of His good pleasure in you and the work he has begun in you HE will be faithful to complete.

So after putting aside things that are contrary to Christ and desiring more of Him through the Word we are also to come to Him as a living stone.

Our Christ is alive. He is the foundation upon which our whole life is built for the glory of God. It's like when Duke says to Rocky in Rocky 4 while he is fighting Drago, an almost super-human opponent, "this is your whole life here."

We glorify God the Father directly through how we live for Christ.

We preach Christ, we proclaim Christ, we obey the Law of Christ, we pray to the Father in Jesus' name, apart from Christ we can do nothing, we are incurable lovers of God because we are incurable lovers of Christ, as a people of God are we given to Christ, we rest in Him, we live and we move and we have our being in Jesus Christ.

Christ is our whole life. There is nothing in our relationship with God that exists without Christ.

As Tom Wells so aptly writes:

While it is true that salvation comes only by knowing the true God (John 17:3), it is equally true that salvation is found in no one else but Jesus Christ, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts4:12)†

So we come to Him as a living stone because this is our whole life here and for eternity.

But other men reject the living stone.

The living stone is rejected and dead stones replace the true and living God. Whether false Gods are carved out of rock, wood, jewels or men follow after the false Gods of their own vain imaginings they are all foundations that are dead and only dead men try to build on them.

The things that are precious to God, including the people of Christ are not precious to other men. We are precious to God because Christ is precious to God and we are in Him. It is the preciousness of Christ to God the Father that makes us precious in His sight. How wonderful it is that the crimson blood of Christ makes me white as snow.

There is no other red colored fluid that can make anything white, even if it is metaphor. Only Jesus blood can do that. And men despise the living stone because of that fact. If one must come to the living stone and build a life upon Him to be seen as precious by God, then one must come by God's demands as they are presented by and in Christ. To do so means you are not permitted by God to make up your own suitable way of being accepted by God. If you are not accepted as being in Christ, you are not accepted at all. If you are not in Christ then you despise that which God deems precious and Christ is choice and precious in the sight of God.

So men reject the living stone once put to the test. In and of themselves upon hearing the Gospel of grace it is rejected.

And so our text says:

**4\* 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**

From God's view, Christ is choice which comes from the greek for election. He is chosen by God and precious, highly viewed and highly regarded.

**5\* 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.**

Now Peter expands some metaphors and links them.

We also are living stones, if we are in Christ. We are a spiritual house made up of living stones. The stones that are a spiritual house are also a holy priesthood whose purpose is to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.

Once again we are confronted with the priority of Jesus Christ as believers.

According to vs. six, Christ the living stone is the corner stone.

In antiquity a cornerstone was usually but not necessarily a ground level foundational stone.

1) With the Canaanites, who preceded Israel in the possession of Palestine, corner-stone laying seems to have been a most sacred and impressive ceremonial. Under this important stone of temples, or other great structures, bodies of children or older persons would be laid, consecrating the building by such human sacrifice. This was one of many hideous rites and practices which Israel was to destroy completely. It may throw light on the curse pronounced upon the rebuilding of Jericho

Figurative Uses:

While all the passages indicate the stone at the corner, there appear to be two conceptions:

(a) the foundation-stone upon which the structure rested (Job 38:6; Isa 28:16; Jer 51:26); or

(b) the topmost or cap-stone, which linked the last tier together (Ps 118:22; Zec 4:7); in both cases it is an important or key-stone, and figurative of the Messiah, who is "the First and the Last." In Job 38:6 it beautifully expresses in figures the stability of the earth, which Yahweh created. In Zec 10:4 the leader or ruler in the Messianic age is represented by the corner-stone. The ancient tradition of the one missing stone, when the temple was in building, is reflected in or has been suggested by Ps 118:22. It is probable that we should read in Ps 144:12 not "corner-stones," but "corner-pillars," or supports (compare Greek Caryatides) from a different Hebrew word, (zawith), Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.

(3) New Testament passages.--Ps 118:22 is quoted and interpreted as fulfilled in Jesus Christ in a number of passages: Mt 21:42; Mr 12:10; Lu 20:17; Ac 4:11 and 1Pe 2:7; it is also the evident basis for Eph 2:20. Isa 28:16 is quoted twice in the New Testament: Ro 9:33, from Septuagint combined with the words of Isa 8:14, and in 1Pe 2:6, which is quoted with some variation from Septuagint. The Old Testament passages were understood by the rabbis to be Messianic, and were properly so applied by the New Testament writers.

So we are other living stones and Jesus is the corner stone. There is no Christianity without both. As stones we are in the process of being built into a spiritual house.

This language of people being a building is used in other Scripture. As God's spiritual house we are the temple of God as is Christ

**Jn.2:19** Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."**20\*** The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"**21\*** But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

**1Co 3:16\*** Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

**1Co 3:17** If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

**2Co 6:16** Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE."

And this puts Christ and us in a unique position.

In Israel under the Old Covenant, even in the wilderness wanderings, there was at least a special structure or building which was the dwelling place of God among the people. Ezekiel's

prophecy pictures God leaving the temple and the people of Israel because of their sin and the restoration of Israel is fulfilled in the one new people of God in the New Covenant era.

Only the priests had particular access to places in the temple and only priests could offer the sacrifice. You bought and or brought the sacrifice.

In the Old Covenant practices we have pictures of what God will actually fulfill in the New Covenant era. These sacrifices never provided forgiveness for sin. There were no qualifications for a priest to be an Old Covenant believer. He just had to be in the right family line. The sacrifices were meant to be a reminder of how sinful the Israelites were so that they would come to the end of themselves and cry out to God for salvation.

The physical temple of stones, mortar, gold and silver is now replaced by a people who are a spiritual temple and a specific priesthood is replaced by a universal priesthood of all believers with Christ as our chief priest.

We no longer need a ceremonial priest to offer any sacrifices for us because Christ has offered all that was necessary once and for all so that now we as His kingdom of priests are able to do what is required of us in the offering of, not physical sacrifices, but spiritual sacrifices and they are all acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Not one genuine spiritual sacrifice by a genuine believer is refused by God and that is because of Christ.

Then Peter quotes from the Old covenant Scriptures:

**6\* 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 comes from Is 28:16 and it s a Messianic prophecy that the elect and highly regarded one sent from God would not disappoint those who believed.

And this was Israel's problem. When HE came they did not believe in the One whom the Father sent. They wanted to believe in the one they wanted God to send. They longed for a Messiah made in their image not the one of God's choosing.

He had to come through Israel, that was God's eternal purpose. The stone had to be laid in Zion, this is God's historic redemptive scheme.

So, now I will ask you, have you ever been disappointed in Christ? Not with your life, not with your circumstances, not with your children or your parents or your job, or your husband or your

wife? If you have not been honestly disappointed at one time or another with any of these things then you must be the brother from another planet.

But have you ever been disappointed with Christ and the salvation He has made possible for you?

It is true that every one of us needs to learn more contentment in every circumstance of our lives, this is living obediently for Christ. But it should be a sickening thing in our hearts to even think that we might be disappointed in Christ Himself.

The Scripture says He that believes in Him will not be disappointed.

How can anyone be genuinely disappointed in Christ if we treasure Him as we should, if we have tasted of the kindness of God in salvation and in the word of God as we sincerely desire it.

We are secure in salvation and can never be forsaken by this living stone. There is no fault or weakness in the one who keeps us until the day of His appearing. In Him there is only truth, and life and every promise will be fulfilled regarding our salvation in Him.

There is no disappointment with or in Christ in the future we are promised here or in heaven. All is meant for the pleasure and purpose of God unto the praise of His glorious grace. We are chosen and precious in God's sight, and what encouragement that must have been for those who were on the verge of great persecution. And how it is a great encouragement to us, not knowing all of what is waiting for us.

But what is certain is Christ and our place in him and with Him, so we cannot be disappointed with Him if we are true believers.

But now, why not stop there? Why does Peter go on in the middle of verse 7 to talk about the negative side of things?

**7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," 8\* 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.**

Why not just keep encouraging the believers rather than going on to talk about the horrible consequences of unbelief?

Look at what he says in verse 7b: "But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone." Now what's the point of that? Here he's saying that not believing in Jesus is like rejecting the stone that God has laid as the corner

stone. God sends his Son to be the main stone in the building of his church - his people. But some do not trust him rather they reject him.

But what effect does that have on the purpose of God? This is the point: it does not defeat God's purpose at all. "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone." The point is: If you believe on this stone, you won't be disappointed and if you don't believe on him you can only be disappointed.

Human unbelief does not frustrate or defeat the ultimate purposes of God. If God plans for Jesus to be the chief corner stone, humans can betray him, desert him, deny him, mock him, strike him, spit on him, hit him with rods, crown him with thorns, strip him, crucify him and bury him but they cannot stop him from being what God destined him to be, the Living Corner Stone of a great and glorious people.

So the point of mentioning the horribleness of unbelief is to stress that it cannot frustrate God's ultimate purposes.

I think this is the point of the shocking verse 8 as well. Peter goes on to say (quoting Isaiah 8:14) that Christ,

became "'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."

To quote John Piper:

"Peter's words at the end of this verse are intended to sever the last strand of self-reliance: "to this stumbling, this disobedience they were appointed."

In other words if any proud unbeliever should boast and say, "I have chosen my own destiny my own disobedience and my own stumbling to show God that I have the final and ultimate say in my life; I have the power of ultimate self-determination; and I can frustrate the purposes of God with my own self-determining will. If anyone boasts in that way, Peter responds with the awesome words: No, you can't; you only think you can. But you will discover sooner or later that whatever you choose and mark this, your choice is real and crucial whatever you choose, "unto this you were appointed."

God and not man will have the last say. No mere human can thwart the ultimate purposes of God not by belief or unbelief.

If we are going to be a spiritual temple for God's presence, and if we are going to be a holy priesthood and if we are going to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, then we must day by day, hour by hour come to Christ. We must taste his kindness by feeding on his word, his promises, his commands, his teachings, and his warnings until we are so filled with him that his word will dwell among us richly as we teach and admonish one another with thankfulness in our hearts to God.