

I Peter 2:2-10
Living Stones

Sermon

Hobart, May 7th, 2016

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I Peter 2:2-10 NLT

⁴ You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor.

⁵ And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests.* Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. ⁶ As the Scriptures say,

“I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem,*
chosen for great honor,
and anyone who trusts in him
will never be disgraced.”*

⁷ Yes, you who trust him recognize the honor God has given him.* But for those who reject him,

“The stone that the builders rejected
has now become the cornerstone.”*

⁸ And, “He is the stone that makes people stumble,
the rock that makes them fall.”*

They stumble because they do not obey God's word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them.

⁹ But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests,* a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

¹⁰ “Once you had no identity as a people;
now you are God's people.
Once you received no mercy;
now you have received God's mercy.”* ¹

* **2:5** Greek *holy priesthood*.

* **2:6a** Greek *in Zion*.

* **2:6b** Isa 28:16 (Greek version).

* **2:7a** Or *Yes, for you who believe, there is honor*.

* **2:7b** Ps 118:22.

* **2:8** Isa 8:14.

* **2:9** Greek *a royal priesthood*.

* **2:10** Hos 1:6, 9; 2:23.

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Pe 2). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

INTRODUCTION:

A. OUR PASSAGE TODAY

1. Focuses on who we are as God's people as a result of who Jesus is, and what he has done for us
2. It talks about who we are as God's people, and the new life he has given us, and the life and purpose of the church
3. It contrasts two profoundly different ways of living as God's people; our human way, and God's way

B. IT LEADS US ON FROM WHAT WE HAVE BEEN FOCUSING ON IN THIS SEASON OF EASTER

1. And leads us into the season of Pentecost

C. PRAYER

BODY:

II. I PETER 2:2-10

I Peter 2:2-10 NLT

⁴You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor.

A. WE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE COMING TO CHRIST

1. He has lived, died and been resurrected and lives at God's right hand
2. We have left our old life behind on the other side of the cross and the grave
 - a) On the other side of the baptismal waters
 - b) We are born again into him, and into his relationship with the Father through the Holy Spirit

4b He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor.

B. THE NEW LIFE IS IN GREAT CONTRAST TO THE OLD

1. Jesus himself, because he didn't fit the old mould, was rejected

a) But he was accepted and greatly honoured by God

2. Jesus as God in the flesh, was very different to the rest of mankind, including his own people, who were supposed to be a nation of priests

3. But his own people rejected him, as we will come to again in verse 7.

4. We are to do what they failed to do

We are to be those who accept Jesus, and put our trust and our lives in the hands of him who is the living cornerstone of God's temple

⁵ And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests.* Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God.

C. WHAT IS THIS TELLING US?

1. That the true temple is not made of inanimate material

a) True religion is not about buildings, rules, religious rites and institutions, it is about life with God

b) Living every moment, every action, in every place, in every relationship, with God, in Christ, through the Spirit leading and empowering us

⁵ And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple.

2. We aren't inanimate stones, we are living parts of God's spiritual temple

a) "God is building"; it is a work in progress,

3. Chris Lockley

* 2:5 Greek *holy priesthood*.

Unlike other religions which focused on a Temple, where it was believed their God dwelt, the early Christians believed that God was to be experienced among them, wherever they were, whatever the building, even without a building. Compared to other religions, they understood themselves as a human temple - each one of them a living stone, a part of God's presence on earth.

Their identity was found in being a part of that living, breathing entity, the church. Take one of them away, and the strength and integrity of their spiritual structure was threatened. But together, in cooperation, they all worked to strengthen up the church. Like stones in a building they were connected with each other, and they were connected with Christ, their foundation stone.²

D. HOW DOES GOD BUILD US INTO HIS SPIRITUAL TEMPLE?

1. Through our relationship with his Son
 - a) Sharing in his life day by day
 - b) By prayer, study, thinking about the life of the Son, the way the truth and the life
 - c) By living and experiencing God's way of love, grace and giving we learn and grow in his character, his nature
2. As we grow to be more the unique individuals God created us to be, we become more fitting members of the body, more fitting living stones in his spiritual temple
 - a) When we do our own thing, when we trust in ourselves, we diminish our part in the temple
 - b) As rocks we become duller and weaker, and can eventually turn to sand and be useless
3. C.S. Lewis, in *The Great Divorce*, talks about how the more we grow into Christ, the more solid and real and substantial we become
 - a) His story pictures two groups of people in the future;

² Chris Lockley, *Stones That Destroy - Stones That Build*, Acts 7:55-60, I Peter 2: 2-10

(1) Those who have grown in Christ, who are solid, substantial, real, lasting

(2) And those who have rejected Christ, who are becoming less and less solid, becoming softer, weaker, less real and substantial until in the end they just become a wisp, a vapor and then cease to exist at all

4. Peter is picturing us who are coming more and more to Christ as growing as living stones in his spiritual temple

⁵ And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests.* Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. ⁶ As the Scriptures say,

"I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem,*
chosen for great honor,
and anyone who trusts in him
will never be disgraced."*

a) The more we trust and rely on Jesus as our foundation, as our mediator and righteousness, the way, the truth and the life, the more solid stones we are

b) And we will be eternally established as part of his spiritual temple, never to be disgraced or rejected

E. THE MEDIATION OF JESUS CHRIST

5b What's more, you are his holy priests.* Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God.

1. How are we holy priests in the temple, and how do we live and grow in our roles as living stones?

a) It all comes about through the mediation of Jesus Christ

* **2:5** Greek *holy priesthood*.

* **2:6a** Greek *in Zion*.

* **2:6b** Isa 28:16 (Greek version).

* **2:5** Greek *holy priesthood*.

2. As we have discussed recently, as both and at the same time God and human, Jesus joins us in the communion of the Father, Son and Spirit

a) As one of us, he brings us into the spiritual temple that is the life of God

b) It is through his living in us, and us living in him that we are united to God, and made his holy priests, his children, his people, serving him day and night

3. We offer spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God through Jesus our mediator

a) He takes our prayers, our worship, our giving, our efforts to care for others, and to live as his lights in the darkness and he fills up what lacks in all of our efforts at these things

b) He transforms our prayers and all we do by adding his perfect prayers, his perfect worship, his perfect acts of sacrifice to ours, to fill in the big gaps

4. So we don't need to worry about our lapses, our flawed, incomplete or inferior acts of service, or our lack of faith or righteousness

a) As our mediator and faithful High Priest Jesus ensures that the sacrifices we offer are pleasing to God

⁶ As the Scriptures say,

"I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem,*

chosen for great honor,

and anyone who trusts in him

will never be disgraced."*

5. We will never be disgraced if our trust is in Christ, rather than in ourselves

* **2:6a** Greek *in Zion*.

* **2:6b** Isa 28:16 (Greek version).

⁷ Yes, you who trust him recognize the honor God has given him.* But for those who reject him,

“The stone that the builders rejected
has now become the cornerstone.”*

6. Again those who trust will be built up and honoured in
God’s presence, along with Jesus

a) Those who reject him will miss out on that blessing

F. THIS QUOTE IS FROM PSALM 118:22

²² The stone that the builders rejected
has now become the cornerstone.

²³ This is the LORD’s doing,
and it is wonderful to see.

²⁴ This is the day the LORD has made.

We will rejoice and be glad in it.

²⁵ Please, LORD, please save us.

Please, LORD, please give us success.

²⁶ Bless the one who comes in the name of the LORD.

We bless you from the house of the LORD.

²⁷ The LORD is God, shining upon us.

Take the sacrifice and bind it with cords on the altar.

²⁸ You are my God, and I will praise you!

You are my God, and I will exalt you!

²⁹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!

His faithful love endures forever.

1. We can see why Peter quoted from this Psalm.

* **2:7a** Or *Yes, for you who believe, there is honor.*

* **2:7b** Ps 118:22.

- a) It is talking about the same thing, the faithful growing in Godly success, living to give sacrifice, praise and thanks to God because he is good, and always loving towards us

G. REJECTION

1. Peter now contrasts faith with rejection

⁸ And, "He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall."^{*}

They stumble because they do not obey God's word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them.

2. He is reemphasizing what he has already said

- a) Jesus is where we stand or fall
b) By being so different to the status quo of our minds and attitudes, and our expectations, many find him unacceptable, but fall as a result

3. We saw this when people from his hometown tried to stone him for claiming to be the Messiah, come to bring peace and new life to his people

- a) We see it with Stephen being stoned for speaking against the people's reliance on the temple built with physical stones in Acts 7;

4. Let's just read part of what happened, and see how it fits with what we are learning from Peter

Acts 7:46-58

⁴⁶ "David found favor with God and asked for the privilege of building a permanent Temple for the God of Jacob.* ⁴⁷ But it was Solomon who actually built it. ⁴⁸ However, the Most High doesn't live in temples made by human hands. As the prophet says,

⁴⁹ 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.

Could you build me a temple as good as that?' asks the LORD.

* **2:8** Isa 8:14.

* **7:46** Some manuscripts read *the house of Jacob*.

'Could you build me such a resting place?

⁵⁰ Didn't my hands make both heaven and earth?'

⁵¹ "You stubborn people! You are heathen* at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That's what your ancestors did, and so do you! ⁵² Name one prophet your ancestors didn't persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous One—the Messiah whom you betrayed and murdered.

⁵³ You deliberately disobeyed God's law, even though you received it from the hands of angels."

⁵⁴ The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen's accusation, and they shook their fists at him in rage.* ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. ⁵⁶ And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!"

⁵⁷ Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him

⁵⁸ and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

5. Stephen's attack on their being so focused on the physical aspects of their identity and heritage, the law, the land and the temple in particular that they rejected Jesus, led to his being stoned to death

a) They had the opportunity in Christ to become truly the holy nation of God, his holy temple

b) But so many stumbled on the chief cornerstone. They were so focused on their entrenched beliefs that they tripped over Christ

H. PETER IS MAKING CLEAR THAT WE NEED TO BE DIFFERENT

1. We need to get our eyes off what we think and what we rely on religiously, and keep them on Christ, who is the only true light, the only foundation, the only true mediator and High Priest

I Peter 2:9

* 7:49–50 Isa 66:1–2.

* 7:51 Greek *uncircumcised*.

* 7:54 Greek *they were grinding their teeth against him*.

⁹But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests,* a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

2. They are not like Israel who stumbled...

8b They stumble because they do not obey God's word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them.

3. This is what Israel failed to fulfil

- a) Israel is a witness to disobedience, and unfaithfulness to God
- b) They looked for their identity, their religious security and foundation in the law, the land and the temple that they felt made them God's people

4. But they forgot that God was their identity, and they needed to trust in the one who chose them and rescued them so many times

- a) They needed to trust in his covenant faithfulness, his unfailing love of Psalm 118:29

¹⁰“Once you had no identity as a people;
now you are God's people.
Once you received no mercy;
now you have received God's mercy.”*

I. WHO IS PETER TALKING TO?

1. They are Gentiles. They were not God's chosen people, not part of his royal priesthood
2. But now, in Christ they are (9b) “called out of the darkness into his wonderful light”

J. HOW ARE THEY A LIGHT?

* 2:9 Greek *a royal priesthood*.

* 2:10 Hos 1:6, 9; 2:23.

1. Because they have received God's mercy, and been made God's people, his royal priesthood, living stones in his spiritual temple, his household, his family

a) And so;

9b As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

K. BEING LIGHTS OF GOD'S GOODNESS

1. Note, we are not God's people, just in order to be good, or better than others, nor to show others up or judge them
2. We are God's people who once received no mercy, but now have received God's mercy
 - a) As a result of God's grace, we can show not our goodness, but God's
3. We are able to show the light of God, because God has called us into his wonderful light

L. BECAUSE GOD HAS BEEN SO MERCIFUL, LOVING, GRACIOUS, KIND AND GOOD TO US;

1. We, through our new life in Christ, through the Holy Spirit are able to demonstrate, and live and be lights of God's goodness and light
 - a) And thus lively stones in his spiritual temple
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III. BEING LIVING STONES

A. AS WE NOTED, THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE OF JESUS' DAY THREW STONES INSTEAD OF BEING LIVELY STONES

1. They were going to stone Jesus in his home town because he didn't conform to their expectations
2. They stoned Stephen
3. And later they tried to stone Paul

B. CHRIS LOCKLEY

1. Discusses our being living stones, in contrast to being stone throwers

We have the choice of how we see ourselves and our potential, and how we see and regard others. Our lives can be like living stones, an incorporated part of Christ's presence in the world.

In that way, we can help bring life and hope to people. We can build each other up, and provide a place of shelter and healing for those who hurt.

On the other hand, or perhaps I should say, IN the other hand, we can be people who throw stones that destroy and tear down - like those stones thrown at Stephen in Acts chapter 7.

One of the things that got Stephen into trouble was the way he challenged the authority of the Jewish leaders. Among other things, he called into question the importance of the Temple - the heart and focus of the people of Israel - a symbol of religious and national security and identity. He even said that the stones of the Temple would be thrown down - and that it didn't really matter if they were. The stones of that Temple were nothing compared to being a part of Christ's people - his spiritual dwelling.

The people didn't want to hear that. The authorities didn't like being threatened at the heart of their power. So they picked up stones, and they killed him.

Stones that are thrown to cause hurt and injury. Stones that harm the things which bring life. Stones thrown to destroy community - Christ's community - for the sake of power and control.

Or stones that build and create. Stones that shelter and work together.

Stones that form a living, breathing community.

It's not to be unexpected that if we choose to pick up stones that will build and give life that we will also fall victim to those who want to tear down and cause harm. As Stephen found, there is often a cost in expressing God's love.³

CONCLUSION:

C. LET US LIVE AS LIVELY STONES, PLACED IN THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE BY GOD

1. Letting Jesus and the Spirit strengthen and build us,
and therefore contribute to the building and nurturing
of the rest of God's holy temple

a) And reflecting God's goodness and light to those around us

D. PRAYER

³ Chris Lockley