

Living Stones in a Spiritual Temple

Lesson Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-17

Focus Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-12

Key Verse: Like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:5

1 PETER 2:1-12 (NRSV UE)

1 Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander.

2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation—

3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and

5 like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

6 For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

7 This honor, then, is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,"

8 and "A stone that makes them stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

10 Once you were not a people, but now you

1 PETER 2:1-12 (KJV)

1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 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.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not ob-

are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul.

12 Conduct yourselves honorably among the gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.

tained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

KEY TERM

- **Exile** – Banishment, expulsion; a period of forced absence from one's home country.

INTRODUCTION

This letter is written by the Apostle Peter. Peter is the disciple that walked with Jesus from the beginning. He witnessed the evolution of a small ministry comprised of lowly fishermen that ultimately led to witnessing the miraculous acts of healing, the bringing life back to the

dead, and to a religious movement that converted thousands. Peter was touched by God, which revealed that Jesus was not simply another prophet, but the Messiah. He was a Jew who understood Jewish laws and practiced the traditions. Peter was headstrong and determined, fearless one moment and fearful the next. But Peter was appointed as the caretaker of the church, holding the

keys that would block the very powers of hell. Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter became a

powerful evangelist and the established leader of the newly birthed church.

This first letter by Peter illustrates his ability to reconcile the Jewish theology of priestly roles into a new priesthood of believers. Peter speaks to both Jews and Gentiles, a nuance of God's conviction of the Gospel in a holy vision. This final lesson culminates with the first letter from Peter to a Christian community.

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It examines and educates on the new beliefs that transcend physical justification as well as illustrates the spiritual and intangible aspects of being Christian.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Peter brings a new perspective of what it means to be Christian. In the opening line

of his letter, Peter addresses his readers as “exiles . . . who have been chosen” (1 Pet. 1:1), a phrase that foreshadows Peter’s entire message. Peter writes this letter to acknowledge the truth of the inclusive and global purpose of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. He presents a testimony of faith in this perfect sacrifice as the indisputable evidence of a new covenant through Jesus Christ. He addresses the mounting tension that was clear to the believers as a form of banishment. He established that if you are a citizen of Christ’s kingdom, you are an exile, mainly because the present world is not under Christ’s rule. Believers are living under foreign rule, while awaiting Christ’s return. However, the consolation is that a believer’s true citizenship is in his kingdom “kept in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4).

Like exiles in any country, a Christian will not necessarily enjoy the favor of the rulers of the land where they live. Christ came to this land himself but was “rejected by mortals” (1 Pet. 2:4), and all citizens of his kingdom should expect the same treatment. Nonetheless, God has called believers to stay and patiently wait, to reside in this alien land while conducting the work of Christ

(1 Pet. 1:15-17). This work is compared to that of the priesthood. Priests performed duties of offering sacrifices and pronouncing blessings. Both of these duties required priests to be set apart, consecrated, and holy prior to entering God’s presence. Therefore, as temples for God’s Spirit, each Christian is called and chosen to strive for purity or holiness. Peter states this directly, “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war

against the soul. Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge” (1 Pet. 2:11-12).

SANKOFA

“Let the purpose of God, for which you ought to adore him every day, be plenteously fulfilled in you,

and let it be seen that he has chosen you to know Christ that you may make him known to others!” C. H. Spurgeon

Throughout life we are chosen for many things. We may be selected by our friends to join their teams or groups. A person can be chosen or selected over others for a job or special assignment. Some would

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say that they chose their mate or partner in love. Being chosen for work or personal reasons can be flattering and even seem to be an honor. But the greatest honor is to be chosen by God. According to the Bible, God chooses people throughout time to carry out a divine plan. The historical narrative of the Jews is based on the premise that they are a chosen people, a nation established by God. However, this narrative does not end with the Jews. Their Bible, as well as the Christian

Bible, states that the purpose of Abraham was to be a father of many nations. The nation of Israel is believed by the Jews to be intentionally chosen by God, and they are able to celebrate that honor. Although they may have been chosen first, they are not exclusively chosen by God. For Christians, God has allowed all of humanity to

receive the same honor as chosen children and heirs to God's kingdom. This honor requires sacrifice and the assignment of a spiritual priesthood that incorporates praise and thanksgiving, along with the obedient service of sharing the Gospel with the world. Members of the body of Christ accept this calling by God. Whosoever wants to receive Christ can come, confess their sins, and

be saved. But it does not end there. Each Christian is chosen for such a time as this to conduct the priestly duty of becoming a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1) and performing daily intercessory prayer. The duty to discard old ways may be difficult, and even seem impossible at times, but with God all things are possible (Matt. 19:25-26).

CASE STUDY

For Christians, God has allowed all of humanity to receive the same honor as chosen children and heirs to God's kingdom.

Here is the true testimony of a man we will call Jon. Jon is grateful that Jesus gave him a second chance. His first conviction came when he was only thirteen years old. He was convicted for aggravated assault. He spent time in and out of juvenile detention centers. Showing up to the police station became a second job for his mother. He eventually

accumulated a criminal rap sheet 20 pages long. He failed the seventh grade and went to four different high schools before eventually dropping out while in his freshman year. The streets eventually landed him in prison in 2002 for his role in the murder of a man in his community. It was there in prison in solitary confinement that he met Jesus and Jon stated he was never the same since

then. Because Jesus gave him a second chance at life, he had the privilege of serving with Prison Fellowship and advocating for policies that are redemptive, biblical, and remove common barriers for those with criminal records.

While this response is inspiring, it doesn't represent society's same level of compassion. People are often unwilling to give a second chance to someone who is a convicted felon. Christians even profess a belief in second chances in theory, but their actions reveal they don't truly believe it. This can be seen by the fact that men and women with criminal convictions often find it hard to get a job, even when qualified. But Jon was chosen by God. Jon met with senators and congressional leaders. Jon was eventually released and went

back into prisons to speak to inmates, worked with gang members in Chicago, and mentored youth. Jon even finished school, went into ministry, and started a family with two beautiful sons. Jon continued to pray. He prayed over the city's mayor and later

helped start programs that serve families in his community. He worked in a community partnership with local police officers to help local youth. These programs made a difference. And according to Jon, he just got started.

LIFE APPLICATION

To be rejected by anyone is extremely painful. It causes one to feel ashamed and hurt. However, when rejection appears to have a purpose, the outcome may not be as heavy. Christians may often feel rejected by others around them simply because there is no desire to participate in worldly activities. Past habits that were enjoyable are no longer sought out by believers who are seeking a sanctified and transformed life. Therefore, feeling like an alien in a foreign land may be awkward but not unbearable. Instead, there may be opportunities to

introduce a new culture of Christ's love to the world environment in which you live. The word *ambassador* is often used as the role Christians play in their daily lives. We are in the world but not of the world. Therefore, be careful to maintain your identity as God's

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child. But feel free to share the benefits of your family with others. Be prayerful of how you can show the love of Christ in an alien land.

QUESTIONS

1. As we close out this quarter, where do you see yourself as an ambassador for Christ?
2. What new regions or territories are you willing to explore to share the Gospel?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn or Song of Praise

“He Has Done Great Things for Me” –
Hymn #507, *African American Heritage Hymnal*

CLOSING PRAYER:

Our Father and Our God, we are so grateful for all the great things you have done. You have kept us, blessed us, protected us, and provided for us. You have brought us a mighty long way. But most of all, Lord, we are grateful for our Savior Jesus Christ. If it had not been for the Lord on our side, we don't know where we would be. So we thank you, Lord, once again for grace and mercy. We pray that the lessons from this quarter have sparked a zeal in our hearts to serve you even more, and to share the Gospel throughout our land. May your Spirit keep us today and forever more until the Lord returns. It is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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