

The Cornerstone and Spiritual Sacrifices

Believe in the Cornerstone and be Living Stones in the Spiritual House of God

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2:1-10.

- 1) "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,
- 2) As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby,
- 3) If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.
- 4) Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,
- 5) You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- 6) Therefore, it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."
- 7) Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,"
- 8) and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.
- 9) But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;
- 10) Who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:1-10 NKJV)

Introduction. The apostle Peter probably wrote this letter before 70AD, because according to tradition he was crucified before the destruction of the Temple in 70AD. For the Jews at that time, the

Temple in Jerusalem was a symbol of God and His presence and God's favor. Jesus prophesied when He was living on the earth that the Temple would be destroyed and the animal sacrifices that they use to sacrifice for the atonement of sins would come to an end. This indeed happened just as Jesus foretold. Now here Peter comes, and he writes to the believers, before he died, and says: "you are a spiritual house." In other words, you are the real "House of God". God doesn't really live in this Temple in Jerusalem that is about to be destroyed, but "you are the living stones" and the offerings that you are to bring to God should not be animals, but you should offer spiritual sacrifices. So what did the apostle Peter have in mind when he wrote this letter?

1) What is this Spiritual House? (Verse 4). What is its Identity? How is it called?

-- This Spiritual House is not a Monastery or a literal building. Don't get the idea of people living in seclusion and that only read the Bible and that pray all day and who never marries. This Spiritual House is not like a Roman Catholic Monastery. It is a SPIRITUAL House.

-- Jesus Christ is the Foundation and the Cornerstone of the House. God has chosen him and He is Precious (verse 6). A Cornerstone in ancient times was laid first in the construction of particular buildings. A cornerstone would have determined if the building under construction had a firm foundation. Without the cornerstone, the building would not have been stable. The Cornerstone in a spiritual sense refers to the fact that without Jesus Christ the Spiritual House would fall apart. Jesus Christ is the Cornerstone, and He gives the Building it's security and stability. If He wasn't there, there wouldn't be a Spiritual House. The Cornerstone would be part of the Foundation of a Building or the most important part. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3:10,11 the following: "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:10, 11 NKJV). Paul says further in Ephesians 2:19-22: "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ

Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22 NKJV)

How does the rest of the building look like? How is it called? --Believers in Christ are called "living stones" (verse 5). They have been made alive through the Holy Spirit. In other words, they have been born again. Only those who have been born of the Spirit of God are called "living stones." Only those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their only Savior and Lord are living stones. And everyone has its place. Just like in a normal building, each stone has its place.

-- The "living stones" are called a "chosen generation." Jesus Christ Himself has chosen them. Jesus said in John 15:16 to His disciples and all his disciples through subsequent generations: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16 NKJV).

-- Believers are also called "a royal priesthood." In other words, they will rule over a kingdom, and they will intercede or pray. You are a king through your unity with Jesus Christ. Believers should rule over selfish and sinful desires; they should rule over Satan and this evil world. And believers are a priesthood. Priests in the Old Testament prayed and interceded for the people of God. Believers in Christ should pray and intercede for their fellow believers and the world.

-- Believers are also called a "holy nation." The meaning of holy in the Bible is to be set apart for holy purposes. You are different from this world. If you are a believer, you are not better or superior to other people, but you are different and called to be like Christ and the Holy Spirit that indwells you.

-- Living stones are called "His special people" or His possession. Believers belong to God, not to themselves nor to the world nor to Satan.

-- "Believers were called out of darkness into His marvelous light". God came in Jesus Christ to deliver you from the power of darkness. Believers are free from the bonds of Satan and the world. Through the cross of Jesus Christ deliverance has been wrought.

-- "you have obtained mercy from God" Believers in Christ were children of wrath, because of their rebellion and sins (Ephesians 2:1-3), but God now has mercy on them. They have received forgiveness of sins. The blood of Jesus washed their sins away. This is the identity of the living stones in the House of God.

2. Who are in and who are out in the Spiritual House of God?

Who are out?

-- Unbelievers and the disobedient are out (Verse 7,8).

-- Those who stumble over the Cornerstone are out. The Jews in Jesus' time didn't believe that Jesus was the Son of God, and that is why Jesus prophesied that in their lifetime, in their generation the Temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed, just like it did in 70AD. The Pharisees and the Scribes and many of the Jews didn't believe in Jesus as the Messiah. But today there are also millions of people all over the world that don't believe. They stumble because of unbelief and disobedience. You can never separate faith and obedience in a believer's life. Just as you can never separate unbelief and disobedience. They always go together. That's why Paul describes believers as those who have been granted obedience to the faith (Romans 1:5). Saving faith is intertwined with obedience to God.

-- Those who take offense over the Cornerstone is out (Verse 8). They take offense because Jesus made as if He is God, which He was and is. Millions of people take offense over Jesus, not only because He said He was God, but because of what He stood for: righteousness and holiness, etc. Jesus said many things to people that made them angry. Are there things that Jesus said that cause you to take offense?

-- Those who reject the Cornerstone are out. The Bible says: "the stone that the builders rejected became the chief cornerstone" (vers 7). Historically it was the Jewish leaders and the Romans that rejected Jesus and caused Him to die on a cross. And today it is still the same. People shift Him out of their lives. Is that so with you? Do you reject Jesus out of your life? Have you rejected Jesus and the things which He stands for?

-- Those who embrace their sins as part of their being and personalities are out. Sins like malice of all sorts, deceit, hypocrisy, evil speaking,

idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, covetousness, love of money, blasphemy, murder, taking the Name of the Lord in vain, etc.

Who are in the House?

-- Believers in the Cornerstone are in the House. They will never be disappointed. "...And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame" (Verse 6). This promise is an awesome promise! I wonder if you agree with this promise. I have met many people who have been disappointed with God because He allowed certain things in their lives that they don't agree with. Or because they experienced suffering that they cannot reconcile with a loving and compassionate God. God didn't do things as they would have wanted. Question: Is God our Slave? Does He have to explain Himself to us, for things that don't go according to our plans? He is Sovereign. He is God! We cannot tell God how He must govern the world or our lives and how He should lead us. This promise means that if we believe in Him, we will never be disappointed in who God is. His character will remain the same. What He promised He will fulfill. If we are believers, we will inherit the new heavens and the new earth!

-- Those who are obedient to the word are in (verse 8).

-- Those who taste that The Lord is good and gracious are in (verse 3). Salvation in Christ is not only Head-knowledge. It is Head-knowledge yes, but also a heart thing. Salvation in Christ is an experience. To receive salvation is to receive the Holy Spirit. You experience the joy of sins forgiven. You experience God's love and peace and grace. You experience the indwelling Holy Spirit. Do you experience and taste that God is good to you?

--He is precious to those who are in. "Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious..." (1 Peter 2:6). For believers, Jesus Christ is the most precious thing and Person in the whole world. He is more precious than your wife or husband, your child or mother, father or whatever you count as precious. That's why Jesus said the following: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37 NKJV). Is He the most precious Person in your life? Is He more

precious to you than all your possessions combined? Think about that!
Is He your supreme treasure?

Listen to this commentary from James Smith on 1 Peter 2:7

"Unto you therefore who believe--, He is precious!"

Every believer VALUES Christ. Let others think of Him as they may--all who are taught of God, think highly of Him. They can never honor Him as they wish, or enjoy Him to their satisfaction.

Every believer feels their NEED of him.

No weary traveler ever felt his need of rest,

No hungry laborer ever felt his need of food,

No drowning mariner ever felt his need of a lifeboat

--as the believer has felt his need of Christ!

They need to be saved--and only Christ can save them.

They need to be happy--and only Jesus can make them happy.

They need His blood to cleanse them from sin and procure their pardon.

They need His righteousness to clothe their souls and justify them before God.

They need His Spirit to sanctify their nature and make them fit for Heaven.

They need His intercession to secure them from evil and procure for them good things.

They need His fullness of grace to supply all their needs, from earth to Heaven.

Every believer discovers the exact SUITABILITY of Christ to them.

He is just what they need--He has all that they need!

They are foolish--and He has wisdom.

They are unrighteous--and He has righteousness.

They are unholy--and He has holiness.

They are weak--and He has strength.

They are in bondage--and He has redemption.

They are lost--and He has salvation.

In a word, they are led to see that God has stored up everything in Jesus--and that possessing Him, they have all things!

Every Christian believes on Him to the saving of the soul. They trust Him to procure their pardon, peace with God, and everlasting life.

Their heart goes out to Him,

They repose confidence in Him,

They commit their souls to Him,

They build on Him--as God's foundation;

They hide in Him--as the sinner's refuge; and

They trust themselves with Him--as the almighty Savior.

"Unto you therefore who believe--, He is precious!"

But Jesus is only precious to believers. Others do not feel their need of Him, do not see His adaptation to them, and do not depend on Him for pardon, peace with God, and everlasting life.

Beloved, do you have this saving faith--which renders Christ so precious?

If so, admire the sovereign, and distinguishing grace of God, which has conferred so great a blessing upon you--for not all are given saving faith.

If so, realize the importance of this faith--which renders Christ so precious.

It is the eye--which sees the beauty of Christ.

It is the foot--which travels to Christ.

It is the hand--which lays hold of Christ.

It is the mouth--which tastes the sweetness of Christ.

It is the inward principle--which clings and cleaves to Christ.

Avoid therefore whatever weakens faith, or interrupts its exercise, and prize whatever strengthens it, and makes it vigorous! (James Smith).

-- Those who lay aside their sins are in. All kinds of malice, jealousy, evil speaking and there are many sins we won't mention now. Like Jesus said: "repent and believe the gospel for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15) and "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30 NKJV). Those who repent of their sins are in the Spiritual House.

3. What do they do? How is this House built?

-- The "living stones" grow and are built up through the Word of God. "..As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.." (1 Peter 2:2). The word of God is not only important at the beginning of your spiritual life, but it is essential for the whole duration of your walk as a believer. "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed' (John 8:31 NKJV)."Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." (Psalms 119:11 NKJV).

-- The living stones bring sacrifices, spiritual sacrifices, which are acceptable through Jesus Christ. The sacrifices are only acceptable through Him. In other words, no sacrifice will be accepted unless Christ is the Foundation and Cornerstone of the House. Jesus Christ ended all animal sacrifices that were sacrificed in ancient times for the atonement of sins. The sacrifice and offering of Jesus Christ on Golgotha was sufficient to atone for all the sins of those who repent and believe in Him. That includes past, present and future believers in the Messiah. Listen to what The writer of Hebrews tells us: "For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:26, 27 NKJV). "For by one offering, He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified"(Hebrews 10:14 NKJV). Now the sacrifices we have to offer in no way bring atonement

for our sins, but it is nevertheless valuable in God's sight. And it is commanded by God.

These are the sacrifices that are pleasing to God:

-- **Sacrifices toward God regarding self: brokenness over sin.**

"The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart and saves such as have a contrite spirit" (Psalms 34:18 NKJV).

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise" (Psalms 51:17 NKJV).

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4 NKJV).

"For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," Says the Lord. 'But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word' (Isaiah 66:2 NKJV).

-- **Sacrifices toward God: praise and thanksgiving-**

"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15 NKJV).

"Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High"; "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright, I will show the salvation of God." (Psalms 50:14, 23 NKJV).

"But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9 NKJV).

-- "I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And will call upon the name of The Lord" (Psalms 116:17 NKJV).

-- **The sacrifice of your body is important to God:**

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service " (Romans 12:1 NKJV).

--- **And the sacrifice of prayer:** "Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he

should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne” (Revelation 8:3 NKJV).

-- **Sacrifices toward God regarding people: to do good and to share**

-- "But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:16 NKJV).

--“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" (I Timothy 6:17, 18 NKJV).

-- **Winning people to Christ is regarded as a sacrifice to God by Paul.**

-- "that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:16 NKJV).

-- And lastly, the House of God is built up by the proclamation of the gospel which ties in with the previous point (Verse 9). Believers in Christ are called to proclaim and celebrate the excellencies and praises of God. And to declare His marvelous redemptive plan to the world.

Conclusion:

Are you a living stone in the spiritual house of God?

Or are you dead stone to be thrown out?

Are you built on the Cornerstone and Foundation of Jesus Christ?

Have you received His blood sacrifice and substitutionary atonement on your behalf?

And if you are a believer in Christ, are you bringing Spiritual sacrifices to God?

Believe on the Cornerstone Jesus Christ and be living stones in the Spiritual House of God!