

1Peter 11-02-11b

Let's pick up our study now in 1 Peter 2, we resume here at verse 4, we've seen that Peter has in mind this new birth and new life, and the key to success, as in the earthly life that sort of suggests its nature, is to take in nourishment and grow. Set your desire on that which grows, because this other is destructive, it is ruinous. All of those other things, the envy and the evil speaking and the faunos and the hypocrisy and dolon and so on, all of these things are under that heading of kakos, which is everything that's not good, everything that is ruinous and destructive.

We want the opposite, we want to grow and we have tasted of both. People who are not believers have not tasted the good word of God or the power of the age to come. They haven't tasted that the Lord is better.

This is like growing up on margarine and then you finally taste butter and you say, set aside the margarine. You've grown up on instant coffee and then you get a fresh brewed pot and you say, set aside the instant. Set aside the stuff in the little packet.

You get, you know, cheap Easter money milk chocolate and then you get some really fine chocolate and you say, set aside the Easter money chocolate. Set aside the cheap stuff, I want that good stuff. You have skim milk and then you get some fresh unhomogenized dairy milk and you say, set aside the skim milk.

I have tasted that the dairy milk is better. By the way, this weekend I want to go to that dairy and get us a jug and have the girls have some of that. Keep forgetting some.

Now I remember, of all times, now I remember. Set aside these things that are bad and unproductive and partake of the old. The grass withers, the flower falls, you've been born again, you've been born anew.

And when people talk about born again, Christian, you know, it just is such a hackneyed phrase. It's very meaningful and very powerful to realize that we have been born anew, that we've been born into this whole new set of opportunities. And he says, look, you've tasted them both.

Set your affections, set your desire on this new thing. So then he goes on to say, coming to him as to a living stone rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 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. Well, now this is a shift.

We've left the metaphor of the newborn infant now, and we've got this living stone idea. Well, I ask myself, of all of the illustrations or all of the figures of speech that Peter could use, why would he pick this? Did you notice the italics at the beginning of verse four? As to is not in the Greek. It says coming to a living stone.

And why is it, at least in my opinion, I'll tell you why I think it's illegitimate to add as to in there, because it says coming to him as you would come to a living stone. Hands up everybody that has ever come to a living stone. I mean, how would this tell you anything? Well, just approach Jesus the way you approach living stones.

Remember last week when you approached that living stone? We'll just go to him the same way. What do you mean come to him as to a living stone? I mean, that doesn't help at all, and it's not what Peter said. He said coming to him a living stone.

He is not like a living stone. You don't come to him like you come to a living stone. You come to the living stone.

He is a living stone. So this brings me to my next question. Why does Peter think of Christ as a living stone? Well, of course, if you glance down a little bit, you can see that he's already got the Old Testament scripture in mind that he's going to quote, behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect and precious.

He who believes on him will by no means be put to shame. So he's already got the scripture in his mind, and he's building a ramp up to it. So he says, coming to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious.

Now, here's my next question. I now know that what we're really focusing on here is Jesus as a living stone and not somehow informing me of what coming to him should be like. Come to him as to a fountain of fresh water.

Come to him as to a banquet table. I'm not worried about that. We are coming, and this is pros er commonoi, and this is not coming to him at salvation because this is a present participle.

We keep on coming to the living stone. This is anarthros, as they like to say in the grammar books, meaning it's got no article. Arthros means it has an article, and if it's anarthros, it's article-less.

It's an alpha privative on the presence of an article, so it's a privation of article. Why is that important? Because in Greek, we tend to say, well, there is a king and there is the king. You talk about pop music in the 50s, you can have a lot of kings, but there is the king.

You can have a president or you've got the president. In English, when we put the definite article with something, that makes it special. In Greek, it's kind of the reverse.

When you leave the article off, that emphasizes its quality. That makes it special, and this is anarthros. We would almost do the opposite of Greek and put the definite article to get the sense of it in English.

Coming to the living stone, capital L, capital S, and we are coming ones, coming repeatedly,

making a habit of coming. If this was an heiress, it would be talking about salvation. We come to him as our savior, but this is making a practice or habit of coming to the living stone.

Now, as I said, I had several questions about this. I've answered all of them up to this point, but my next question is, why living stone? Why not fountain of living water? Why not the tree of God's grace into which the branches are grafted? Why not coming to him as the shepherd? Why not coming to him as the door? Why not coming to him as any one of a number of other things? Why living stone? Well, what's the essential feature of stone? It's permanent. It's durable.

It's strong. You remember the three little pigs story? I can barely remember it, but it seems to me there's a wolf and there's pigs making houses out of flimsy stuff, and then one guy makes it out of brick, and he huffs and puffs and he can't blow it down, right? Well, this verse that he's leading up to talks about this stone as building material, and the suggestion here is, what are the pyramids made of? What are all the things that are still surviving in Rome, the Colosseum and the Acropolis in Athens and the Pantheon in Rome? They're made out of stone. They're made out of something durable.

I think part of the Pantheon's made of that beautiful concrete dome, but it's stone, and the primary idea is durability. So coming to him as the living stone, which was rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house. And the primary idea of this whole thing, because he could have said you're coming to him as a living vine and you yourselves are living and bearing fruit.

If he wanted to emphasize fruit bearing, we would have an agricultural theme going on here. But this is stressing something different. We're not talking about fruitfulness.

We're talking about duration. We're talking about stability and strength. And this is a life lived with those qualities, living stone.

This is not a monument to some past glory. This is an ongoing monument. This is a monument to the present.

This is strength and stability and durability and permanence of a living nature. Everything you do is permanent. Everything you do is durable.

Everything you do is strong. Everything you do is as indestructible as it gets in the ancient world. Living stone.

It's not dead stone. It's not a pyramid. It's not a pillar to some long dead potentate.

It's not Ozymandias laying in the desert sands. Living stone. It's present and yet everything about it is permanent and durable.

Coming to him, the Lord Jesus, a living stone. It's almost an oxymoron. It's almost a contradiction

in terms.

If it's living and living water is moving and gushing and accomplishing things and stone is immovable, it's both. It's both and. Rejected indeed by men.

When you look for building materials, they need to be suitable to the purpose. I wouldn't go buy two ton blocks of granite to make a doghouse. I wouldn't get a pallet of Acme bricks if I was going camping and wanted something to sleep in at night.

The building material needs to be suitable to your purpose. What is it you want to build? Why would someone reject a stone? It's not suitable for what they want to build. When men looked at Jesus, the living stone, and rejected him, what does that say? That's not what I want to build.

That's not the kind of material I want to have. I'm not looking for those things. Rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious.

What God wants to build, it's perfectly suitable. It's ideally suited because men are operating in the fallen world of grass and fading flowers. God is working in eternity.

Living stone is what you need to build eternal edifices, eternal houses, eternal structures. That just makes no sense to the mortal man, to the carnal mind. Why would I want to have some pie in the sky by and by? Why would I want to have some treasure in heaven? Why would I want to live selflessly in the interest of the plan and purpose of some invisible deity somewhere? No, I want to live to myself.

I want to please myself. I want it here and I want it now. I want the mess of pottage.

I don't want some far-off inheritance. It's an unsuitable substance. I don't want that.

I'm going to set that aside and find something that suits my own purpose. It's a stone that the human builders reject, but for God, it's perfect. It's ideal.

In fact, Jesus is going to be the special stone, as we'll see in a minute. You also as living stones, and this is where he parlays what he built in the previous paragraph where he was talking about having been born into a new eternal life. You are now a living stone.

When you were born, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible. When you were purchased, not with mere gold and silver, but with the precious blood of Christ. When you learned to set your desire on the adolon milk of the word, the non-deceptive, non-temporary, non-fake-you-out-and-smack-you-in-the-head, non-betray-you-and-leave-you-high-and-dry word of God.

When you latched onto that and began to grow thereby, you became living stone. You're in the mold and in the image and of the stuff that Jesus Christ himself is made of. It's the same material.

The same two words are used. The zontes lithoi, living stones. You also as living stones.

There is no qualitative difference in the description of Jesus Christ as a living stone, and we also as living stones. It's the same thing, because it is human flesh indwelt by the spirit and enabled and empowered by the word. Man shall not live by bread alone, but every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Every rhema that proceeds out of the mouth of God, living in the light of his purpose and his plan. You are being built up oikodomeo, but it's a pneumatikos oikodomeo. You are built a spiritual oikos, hagyon, haeratura, haeros, h-i-e-r-o-s is priest, and haeratura is priesthood, priest-ship, if you will.

There's palatura, well, e-u-m-a is sort of the s-h-i-p of Greek, or the h-o-o-d of Greek. You stick that on a word, and it makes it into an environment, into a priest, priesthood. Citizen, citizenship, or citizenship.

This is hagyon, haeratura. You are being built a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. Now, you know what's interesting to me about this? I just want to be sure I had your attention, because I've never run across this in my whole put-together.

You are being built up out of this living stone, permanent, right? A spiritual house, a holy priesthood. How long is this holy priesthood going to last if it's made out of this living stone, the same stuff that Jesus is made of? How long is Jesus going to last as the God-man? How long are we going to last as born-again? That's how long the holy priesthood lasts. What is the function of a priesthood? Does it serve itself? Is Christ the great high priest, and that's all he needs, is just him and God? Did the Levites get together and say, well, here we are, the Levites, and we're just going to go move off here to Goshen, and we're going to live down here and just do priest stuff.

You all go off and take the land and do whatever you want to do. Priests are conduits of communication. They are ways for God to communicate.

They are ways for God to send and receive traffic, right? That's what priests do. I bring the sacrifice. The priest helps me send it up to God.

I am seeking resolution. I'm seeking word from God. The priest helps me find it.

I want understanding. I want to know God better. The priesthood is there to help me by performing these ordinances and sacrifices and things.

It is a kind of mediatorship. Christ as the high priest is the mediator of the new covenant in the same way that the Levites were mediating the old covenant in that sense. This holy priesthood is made of living stone.

It's not part of the flesh and the grass and the flower that fades and falls. So after the millennial kingdom, into the kingdom of the Father, when you have no more night and no more sea, when

you have the new Jerusalem, the city built four square, when you have the river of life flowing out from under the throne, when you have the tree of life growing on each side, when you have the leaves for the healing of the nations, the holy priesthood will still be functioning. And you are it.

You now are being built a spiritual house. What's a spiritual house for? Somebody dwells in a house. It's not like one of these, oh, here's the Mark Twain house.

Nobody lives there now. Here's the Pawnee Bill house. Pawnee Bill and everybody associated with him is long dead and gone.

It's just a museum. Here's the Ben Franklin house. Here's Monticello.

Here's Benjamin Harrison's birthplace or whatever it might be. It's a house where someone dwells. We're being built into a dwelling place and we are being built into a holy priesthood.

It's stone. It's not going away. It is going to endure.

What's its purpose? To offer up. And this is anah, which means up, is the prefix on this verb, to offer up. And do you remember the configuration of the altar in Solomon's Temple? Do you remember how that worked? Does the altar sit on the ground? The altar is elevated.

Remember, there's a special regulation that says you will not go up to the altar by steps because in raising your knees that way, you're liable to expose some of your flesh that's not covered by the priestly robes and the sprinkled garments. So they had to do what? Had to build a ramp and the Levitical priests went up and carried the sacrifices. The priest carried the sacrifice up the ramp to lay it on the altar.

When it says to offer up, this literally means to carry up, to bear up. It's the picture of the priest going from a lower level up to the level of the altar carrying the sacrifice. And it's not the priest's sacrifice.

It's the sacrificer's sacrifice. That's what a priest does. He takes the guy that says, I want to do a free will offering.

I want to do a whole burnt offering. I want to do a fellowship offering. I want to do a trespass offering.

The priest says, okay, give it to me. And he takes it and he goes up the ramp and he carries it and lays it on the altar to carry up. You and I as living stones are being built up as a spiritual oikos, a spiritual temple, a spiritual house, a spiritual dwelling place, a holy priesthood for the purpose of, this spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God.

And this isn't so much acceptable as pleasing. You pros dectos, EU is good, pros is face to face with. This is pleasant.

God is not just, that's acceptable. You know, that's like getting a C minus on your work. Well, it's acceptable and it ain't great.

This is pleasing. This is an A or an A plus sacrifice. Pleasing to God through Jesus Christ, because he is the original living stone and we are made in his likeness.

We are born again in his likeness. Mankind was born the first time in the image of God, made in the image of God. Now we're born again in the image of Jesus Christ.

He's living stone. We are living stone. What he does is acceptable in God's sight, pleasing in God's sight.

This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And the things that he does last. They're permanent.

They survive the fire of judgment. So do we. We are living stones like him.

We are being built up into something permanent, acceptable, pleasing to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is contained in the scriptures, behold, I lay in Zion, a chief cornerstone. This is the acro-gonion, acro-gonion, acro means up there.

This is the capstone. You know, an acrobat bats around up in the high places. Acrosonic is the highest kind of sound.

You get an acrosonic piano. Some people when they were making subpar pianos thought it was ACRI, like acrid smoke, you know, acrosonic meaning off-putting, but this is acro, this is up high, acro-gonion. And this is, it could be a cornerstone, but it's more often a capstone.

It's the highest featured stone. The other living stones are going to be there. And up at the top is the beautiful, decorative, best stone God ever found.

The Lord Jesus Christ, his son, in whom he is well pleased. And he is featured, he is set up there. We are like the setting, and he is the featured piece.

Chosen, electon, precious, entimon. This is the basis for Timothy's name, valuable, invaluable, entimos. And he who trusts in him, this is pistuon epi auto, who trusts upon him, places their trust on him, will not, will surely not, this is ume, both negative words in Greek.

A double negative in Greek doesn't cancel itself out like it does in English. It doubles it. He will surely not be embarrassed, put to shame.

Everything that was in that initial list, hypocrisy, and evil speaking, and envy, and dolon, and all of those hurtful, negative things, when you put your faith in him, the capstone, it's kind of like a bridge, a beautiful arched bridge, and when you put that final keystone piece in, anybody that

walks across that bridge isn't going to have any problem. It's not going to betray them. It's not going to fall through.

Therefore, to you who believe, to you who are trusting, pistuuson, this is the third person plural, and it's the present active indicative. It's ongoing action in present time. Therefore, to you who are trusting, he is timei, he is precious, but to those who are disobedient, this is apetho.

In verse 8, he quotes again, the lithon, which the builders rejected, has become the head of the corner, the kephale of the corner, and once again, you have this gonias, just as earlier, we had that acro-goni-ion, well, this is what they translate corner, but it means the most featured thing, the most prominent thing. The head of prominence also is, and really, in verse 8, it would be better for it to say, to you who believe he is precious, but to those who are disobedient, and then he sort of breaks off and he says, the stone which the builders rejected has become the most prominent one and is also a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. He's both things.

The same stone is a blessing to some, you know, if you fall on the stone, you're delivered, otherwise the stone falls on you and you're crushed to powder. It's the same stone. Stone does not change, but your relationship to the stone and what happens to you as a result of the presence of the stone is completely different.

Stone of stumbling and rock of scandalon, rock of offense. They stumble being disobedient, this is apetho, apetuntēs, and this is not an heiress, this is another present active participle. They stumble being disobedient.

Their stumbling is in their being disobedient to the word, to the logos, to which also they were appointed, and this is tithemi again, remember apetithemi, set it aside, they were set to this. Now, in English it says they stumble being disobedient to the word to which they also were appointed, and you find people who say, well, they were appointed to be disobedient. Not in Greek, they were appointed to stumble.

They were appointed, not that the stone would be this beautiful capstone that would not make them ashamed and that they would cling to and that they would emulate and be made of the same stuff as. Being disobedient, they are appointed to stumble. The appointment ties back to proskaktousi, and this also is a present active indicative.

They are stumbling, they are appointed to be stumbling as they are disobedient, and both of these have duration, and you get the idea that as long as you are being disobedient, you are appointed to be stumbling. Stop being disobedient, the stumbling stops. This is not a fate, this is not an heiress, it's not all wrapped up like, well, you know, it's all one thing and you're disobedient so you're going to stumble right into the lake of fire.

It's nothing to do with that. Those who do not appreciate the value of the Lord Jesus Christ, who do not appreciate the value of His redemption, do not appreciate the value of the new birth and

the potential that we have because we are newborn, because we have these things available to us. So long as we do not respond to that, and pathos, in terms of obedience, really has the idea of responding.

So long as you're a non-responder, you are going to be a stumbler. That is God's appointment. That is what God has decreed.

You overlook the value of my son, you don't treat him as a capstone, you treat him as an offensive rock, a rock that needs to be removed. Chop this thing out of the roadway, bulldoze it out, this is interfering with my plans. You're going to trip over that rock, you're not going to get rid of it, and as long as you treat it with disrespect, you're going to be a stumbler.

That's the appointment. It's very clear in Greek, and really, I mean, you'll never find anybody who knows any Greek trying to make anything other than that out of this verse. Well, we'll pick up next time in verse 9. You are a chosen generation.

And once again, this ties the things together. Jesus Christ is a living stone, you are living stones. He is the chosen capstone in God's plan, you are chosen.

He is being built into something permanent, and is the high priest of a permanent priesthood, you are chosen to be a spiritual house, built. You are chosen to be a priesthood, built, that's permanent, that lasts. And what's exciting to think about is that the things we learn about the value of communication with God, the importance of communication with God, the importance of maintaining and cultivating our fellowship with God through that communication that flows in both directions, leaning on the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, exercising priesthood on our own behalf, offering ourselves as living sacrifices and so on, is going to inform us and qualify us and give us necessary priestly experience when we serve in this eternal, holy priesthood in ages to come.

We're not learning these things just for ourselves. And if we fail to learn them now, we're not just hurting ourselves. We are disqualifying ourselves in the future.

Would you like to have a doctor working on you that really kind of didn't pay attention in medical school and said, well, you know, I'm not hurting anybody but myself. And then he ends up in practice and he's hurting a lot of other people because he didn't learn his stuff. We have an obligation to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have an obligation to God the Father. We have an obligation to ourselves. And we have an obligation to the future function of our priesthood, among many other things, to be aware of what Jesus Christ has given us through his work on the cross, when he redeemed us with that precious blood, when we received that new birth, when we became living stones.

We want to be built up. We want to be edifying. There's a great passage over in Ephesians

chapter 2. We didn't have time to look at tonight.

But Paul says the exact same thing. I'll just give this to you real quickly. But in Ephesians chapter 2, you remember it says that when we were dead, we were saved.

We were made to sit in heavenly places with Christ. By grace you have been saved through faith. Ephesians 2.8.9 We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus.

God has prepared them beforehand. You who were Gentiles, alienated from the commonwealth, and so on, you have been brought near by the blood of Christ. He is our peace.

He's abolished the separation. We've been reconciled. He preached peace.

And now therefore, verse 19, Ephesians 2, you are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are fellow citizens with the saints. You are members of the household of God.

You can't build a spiritual house out of one or two rocks. It takes a bunch. We've been born into a family.

We have a relationship with one another. Having been built, ep oikodomeo, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the, guess what Paul uses in Ephesians 2.20, akrogonio, the chief capstone, in whom the whole building, oikodome, 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. Paul says the exact same thing in Ephesians 2.19 and 20 that Peter is saying in our passage.

We are living stones. We are built together in Christ, a dwelling place for God, a permanent structure where his glory can dwell and be reflected, a spiritual priesthood. It's a holy temple.

Its purpose is worship. Its purpose is to emanate and display and radiate the glory of God. Well, we'll pick up at this point in our study next week and we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the almost unimaginable privilege that you have bestowed on us of not only being rescued, not only being saved and cleansed and entered into relationship with you through Christ, but to have these wonderful opportunities and to be used to build something permanent and something positive that we can be of service and be reflecting your glory in countless ages to come and in ways that we cannot even imagine in our limited human existence. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will remind us of these truths, that this passage will be impressed on our heart in such a way that we will continue to set our desire on the milk of your word, that we'll remember our role and our opportunity in being obedient and that as a result, we will be chosen stones, useful in building that permanent structure for your glory. We praise these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.

