

God's Chosen Community 1 Peter 2v4-8

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[0 : 0 0] As you come to him, the living stone, rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For in Scripture it says, See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.

Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.

And the stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. They stumble because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for.

Let's talk to God. We're going to pray and ask for God's help as we look at this text together. Let's pray. Father, we trust you that your word that we have just read and listened to is true and trustworthy.

[1 : 3 5] It is living and powerful. And so we pray that your word would do an effective and changing work in each of our lives.

Father, we pray that as we come face to face with Jesus through this word, we would be a people who build our lives on the solid foundation of who Jesus is, and that we would live our lives in response to what he has done.

Father, please change us. Please open up our eyes to see Jesus more clearly and understand who he is and what he has done.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. A couple were walking around a car boot sale.

And as they walked around and surveyed the items, they picked up what was a very small, plain bowl, about the size of a breakfast bowl, for three dollars.

[2 : 5 3] Clearly, the seller had rejected it as a piece of worthless junk. To the buyers, however, it was something precious to them. And to them it had some kind of value.

And they decided that they would have it valued. And they discovered that this three dollar bowl was worth about one to two hundred thousand dollars.

They then decided they were going to take it to auction. And when it went to auction, it sold for a massive 2.2 million dollars.

To one, it was rejected as useless. To another, it was chosen as precious. Now, for many people, Jesus Christ is seen as someone to reject.

Have a look at verse 4, what we read together. Verse 4. As you come to him, that's as you come to Jesus, the living stone, rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to him.

[4 : 1 0] Jesus was rejected. He was pushed aside, ignored, betrayed by everyone, and left to die on a cross.

But in the eyes of God, he is chosen, and he is precious, with eternal value. Now, the point is, if we are followers of Jesus too, that's going to be our experience.

That's going to be our story too. Let's read verse 4 again. As you come to him, as you come to Jesus, the living stone, rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to him, you also like living stones.

You see, to live as a Christian in this world, if you speak for Christian truth, if you stand up for Christian values, it means we will face rejection.

To the world, if you are a Christian, you may feel like a stranger, an outsider, a nobody, irrelevant, outdated, and of no value.

[5 : 24] Nothing more than a rejected piece of junk. But in the eyes of God, you are chosen, and you are precious.

Have a look back at chapter 1, verse 1. Look at what it says there, how it reminds us. Look how it starts, to God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered, verse 2, but who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God.

We might be forsaken by friends, opposed by family, but always remember this, we are God's chosen people, loved and treasured like Jesus.

In fact, what we are is God's chosen community, God's special people, God's representatives, here in this world.

So let's see how this is true. How we are, on the one sense, rejected, but on the other side, chosen and precious.

[6 : 46] We're going to see this in three ways. First, as we look at the way in which Jesus builds his church. Let's read verse 4. As you come to him, that's Jesus, the living stone.

Now that's a very strange way to talk about anybody, talk about them as a stone. Why is Jesus a living stone? Well, we're given a clue. If you look at verse 6, just a little bit further down.

This is a quote from the prophet Isaiah. For in scripture it says, See, I lay a stone in Zion, or in Jerusalem, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.

This is God's word through the prophet Isaiah. And it comes to Isaiah at a time when God's people were in exile, literally strangers in a foreign land.

But there was a problem for them. There was no temple when they were in exile. The temple, you remember, was central to the people because it was through the temple and in the temple that they got to meet God.

[8 : 04] Here in the temple was where their sin was dealt with so that they could have access to God. So no temple, no God, and no relationship with God.

And so the people cry out to God, How are we going to meet you? How are we going to know you? And God makes this promise. And the promise is, in verse 6, let's read it again, He says, See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.

God is saying, I am going to build a new temple, but this new temple is not going to be a physical building made out of blocks and mortar, but this temple is going to be a person.

I lay a chosen, a precious cornerstone. The one who trusts in him, in this stone, this cornerstone, will have life.

And that's exactly what Peter is saying. Jesus is the cornerstone. The cornerstone, or verse 4, the living stone.

[9 : 16] It was the first stone that was put down in the foundation of a building, on which every other stone was laid. So the level had to be right, and the angle had to be right.

It was the foundation and most important stone. And Peter is saying, Jesus is that stone. Jesus is the true foundation, the true temple.

So if you want to know God, if you want to meet God, if you want to enjoy God, you don't go into a building that's made of blocks and mortar. You go to a person, and his name is Jesus.

He is the living stone. The one who came into this world to die for you, to take the blame for the wrong things you've done. The one who rose again from the grave to defeat sin and death.

He is the living stone, the foundation stone, the one who gives you an inheritance and a life that can never perish, spoil, or fade. How do we experience this life?

[10 : 23] Well, look what it says in verse 4. As you come to him, as you come to Jesus, as you trust in him, as you build your life on the foundation of his death and his resurrection, so you have life and life eternal.

That's why those who turn to him are precious. But this building is for a purpose. The coming to Jesus is for a purpose.

There's the first one, living stone, and the second, a spiritual house. So as we come to Jesus, look what happens in verse 5. You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

So you see, everyone who comes to Jesus and trusts in Jesus is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. But not only that, we're built together by Jesus Christ.

So if you can think of us gathered here today that each one of us, if we're trusting in Jesus, is like a block or a brick. And Jesus takes those blocks and those bricks, he builds us on the foundation of his life.

[11 : 55] And he builds us together so that we become, verse 5, a spiritual house. And a spiritual house is another way of talking about the temple.

God's house. So as Jesus builds us together, we become the temple of God. we actually become the dwelling place where God lives by his spirit.

So in a sense, as we gather here together as people who believe in Jesus, we are the dwelling place where God is. God is actually here right now, present with us by his spirit.

Now that's going to be huge encouragement if we are facing rejection from friends or family. Here's what it means. First, no matter what opposition we might face as God's people, God is always with us.

We're a spiritual house. We're built together where God lives by his Holy Spirit. That means that when I experience rejection as a Christian, God will not abandon me and he will not leave me to fend for myself.

[13 : 12] God sticks with us. He never leaves us. Wherever we go as his people, God goes with us because he is dwelling in us and with us.

But the second thing, no matter what persecution we may face as God's people, God is still building up his church. His building project is not finished.

God is still saving people who have rejected him and he's building them together to be his people. You know, when Peter wrote this letter in the first century, a few decades after he wrote it, being a Christian and meeting together as we are right now was an illegal act to do in the Roman Empire.

You couldn't be a Christian and you couldn't meet together. And as a result, thousands of Christians were put to death. Some of them were set alight and used as human torches by Nero, covered in sheepskin and set amongst the lions for the entertainment of the crowd.

And today, in many, many parts of the world, there are Christians who lose their life because they side with Jesus. People are facing rejection.

[14 : 30] But here's the good news and the encouragement. Jesus is still building his church. He was building it when Peter wrote it and he's building it today.

People all over the world in Ireland and in Carigaline are still coming to Jesus and are being built together to become a spiritual house where God lives and dwells.

Yes, life will be tough. Life will be difficult as a Christian. But God, through his son, Jesus Christ, is building his church. We are part of God's never-ending, ever-growing building project.

So yes, we will face rejection. But remember, you are chosen. You are precious. You are part of God's eternal building.

So that's the first thing that we look at. The second thing, Jesus is empowering his church. Have a look at verse 5.

[15 : 38] So you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

So God's people are a spiritual house and they are to offer spiritual sacrifices. Now, spiritual is, it's got a meaning here.

It means to be influenced or to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. In other words, God's people are a spirit-filled, a spirit-empowered people.

The very same spirit that rose Jesus from the dead is the same spirit and the same power that is alive and at work within God's people.

So Jesus empowers his church to serve God in the world where they are. And we serve the Lord in two ways.

[16 : 46] First, he describes us as a holy priesthood. Again, look at verse 5. like you are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.

Have you ever thought of yourself as being a holy priesthood? Well, again, the language takes us back to the temple, to the Old Testament. And in the temple, the priests were given that special work.

They were set apart from everybody else and they were dedicated to serve God in the temple. That was their life's work. In fact, through their serving, they were representing God to the people.

They were like a mediator between God and people. What they did was make God known to the people. What God wanted to say, he said through the priests. What God wanted them to do, he said through the priests.

God communicated, if you like, through them to the people. Now, we are God's holy priesthood. God's holy priesthood.

[17 : 52] We are set apart by God and dedicated to serve God. More specifically, we are to make God known to the people around us.

That's the purpose of the church. We are to display God to the world. So, if somebody should come up and ask and they say, what's God like?

I've never met God. Could you tell me what he's like? Well, part of that answer is to say, I tell you what, go and have a look at the church.

Go and have a look at Carigaline Church. Look how the church lives. Listen to what the church says. Observe them in the way in which they behave.

The way in which they interact. As people hear and see, they will begin to understand something of what God is like. So, as a holy priesthood, we are to display God to the world.

[18 : 55] As he empowers us and fills us with his Holy Spirit, he enables us and equips us to live as God's people to serve him where we are right now.

So, he empowers his church. And, not only that, we are to be spiritual sacrifices.

You see, the primary role of the priest was to offer sacrifices. That's what they did all day, every day. So, verse 5, we are to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices to God.

Now, we've got to be very clear here that we don't get confused. We're not called to make sacrifices to God so that God will accept us. No, Jesus is that perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Have a look at chapter 3. So, you need to maybe flick over the page, I'm not sure, but chapter 3, the big 3, and then verse 18, which is the little 18.

[20 : 04] So, chapter 3, big 3, little 18. Here's what it says. It's talking about Jesus being the sacrifice. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God.

You see, when Jesus died, his sacrifice was for us on our behalf. It was perfect, it was complete, it was sufficient. When Jesus died, that was enough.

He died for all of our sin, past, present, and future, to bring people like us into a relationship with God. Go back to chapter 2.

So, we're not to make a kind of sacrifice to try and get God to accept us and to earn his approval. No, in the light of what Jesus has done for us, because Jesus was that true sacrifice, in response, we offer ourselves as, as if you like, a living sacrifice to God.

Through Jesus Christ. It's because of what Jesus has done that we can now offer ourselves to God as a sacrifice. And how do we offer ourselves to God?

[21 : 24] How are we going to be a living sacrifice? Well, as the role of the priest was to do, it's to make God known in the world. That's our sacrifice.

Our sacrifice is to display the goodness and greatness of God through what we say and how we live. We'll get more into this next week. But as we go, as we disperse from this gathering here, as we go to our workplace, as we go back to our families, as we go to college, as we hang out with our mates, we are going as a holy priesthood, representing God where we are, being spiritual sacrifices, showing people the goodness and the greatness of God.

God's people, as we step out in faith as God's people, as his representatives, the spirit will equip us and enable us to represent him and to live for him in the world in which we live.

yes, we will face rejection. Yes, it will be hard. But he fills us with his spirit and with his power to enable us to keep on going.

So, he builds his church, he empowers his church, and Jesus honours his church. Let's read verse 6, that quote from Isaiah.

[23 : 01] For in scripture it says, See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone. Jesus, as we've seen, is that chosen cornerstone.

His death for us, his resurrection for us, is the foundation for our lives. And if we build our life on Jesus, if we align ourselves to his level and to that angle, if we commit ourselves to him, we are going to face opposition and rejection.

That's the big message of Peter. If you side with Jesus, if you follow him, if you identify with him, you will get hit. But, look at the rest of verse 6.

Jesus died and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. Jesus died a shameful death.

Mocked, ridiculed, laughed at. He hung on the cross alone. The whole world shamed him. But he was raised in glory and honour.

[24 : 19] And what Peter is saying to us is, so that will be for you. We may suffer shame now. We may suffer all kinds of struggles, but we will be raised in glory and honour.

Yes, you may experience isolation at work. Yes, you may feel like a stranger among friends. But those who trust in Jesus will never be put to shame.

in fact, we will be honoured. Look at verse 7. Now to you who believe, this stone is precious.

Now, I just want us to take a step back from this and just be clear as to what this is saying. It can also be read, verse 7, so the honour is yours for those who believe.

So the honour is yours for those who believe. So let me read the end of verse 6 again and the beginning of verse 7 so you get the flow. Okay, here we go, the end of verse 6. And the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame, so the honour is yours for those who believe.

[25 : 37] His point is this, that one day the risen Lord Jesus is going to return and all those who have honoured Jesus in this life, well, Jesus will in turn honour you.

You can think of the great big medal processions that you see in the Olympics where the music sounds, the trumpet blasts and the winner comes out into the middle of the stadium and stands on top of the podium and receives the gold medal and the music is played and the whole stadium cheers and sees that this one above everybody else is honoured.

And in a sense it will be something like that, that God will gather all his people before a watching world, all those that stood against us, all those that were opposed to Christ will watch and see God's people being honoured by the King of Kings.

Instead of shame, glory. Instead of rejection, honour. there. But that's not all.

Those who have taken the other side, those who have rejected God's people and rejected Jesus Christ, those who've been honoured by the world because they stood opposed to Jesus, will they in turn will be shamed before Jesus.

[27 : 24] Look at the rest of verse 7. But to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.

The world which rejected Jesus, mocked him, laughed him, ridiculed him. The world which rejected God's people, shamed them and persecuted them, will in turn be rejected by Jesus.

Instead of receiving glory, it will be shame. Instead of honour, it will be judgment. You see, Jesus, the living stone, confronts each one of us today.

Look at verse 8. He is a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. He stands before us, if you like, this morning as a great big stone that we must deal with, that's right in our path as we walk through life.

That stone is before us. And Jesus is either going to be the foundation stone of your life, you will either trust in his death and resurrection for you, or you will decide to discard that stone and say, no, I'm going to build my own life my own way.

[28 : 53] So that stone will either be your foundation or that stone will either crush you or break you. Look at the end of verse 8.

They stumble because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for. So as we are confronted with Jesus, it is a case of saying, well I'm going my own way or I'm building my life on him.

You see, to some, Jesus is just a worthless piece of junk, an old item that you see in a car boot sale of no value, of no worth.

But to God, he is chosen and precious, the one who died for you, the one who rose again from the grave for you.

And the story of Jesus and the experience of Jesus is going to be your story and your experience. Because to be a Christian in this world will mean that you will be disowned, you will be rejected, you will be pushed aside.

[30 : 11] But, you are God's chosen and precious people. Jesus died for you. He rose for you. He will not let you go.

You will not be shamed by him. You will be honoured by him. You will be raised in glory just as Jesus was raised in glory. So, what will we do with this stone, this living stone?

Will we build our life on the foundation? Or are we going to ignore it and be crushed by him? Rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to him.

You decide. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for Jesus.

[31 : 27] Thank you for his death for us. Thank you for his resurrection from the grave, defeating death, destroying the grave and giving life to all who will trust in him.

Father, help us that we would build our life on the Lord Jesus, that we would level our lives to him, that we would angle ourselves to him, that he would be our rock, that we would not turn from him.

And Father, would you please help us to remember that just as Jesus was rejected, we too will be rejected. But help us to remember that just as he is chosen and precious, so we are your chosen and precious people, loved by you and cared for by you.

Father, help us to walk with you today. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.