

The Exiled Life: 1 Peter 2:4-10

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Preacher: Scott Liddell

[0:00] I want to begin with a presupposition this morning, and that is this. And this is the big idea of the message as well, that one's identity determines one's behavior.

! How one thinks of himself or herself is a determiner in part of one's behavior. I'll give a quick example. If one sees himself as all he ever has heard in his whole life is, you're no good, you'll never amount to anything, likely that person will live into that identity in some way. Conversely, if somebody grows up in a household that knows he or she is deeply loved, and that there's nothing they can do that would threaten the mom and dad's love for this child, that nothing he or she could do will affect the love of the parents toward this child. That child also may have a certain trajectory, and he may live into that trajectory, that one's identity is a determiner of one's behavior. Let me share some concerns I have with that. Number one, what happens when those seasons of identity are over? Let me illustrate how one's identity affects one's behavior. I'm sure we all have been to a sporting event, and we've had that person in the stands, and their son or daughter is playing, and the team is losing, and they are just getting hot. And so they're chewing out their child, they're chewing out the refs, they're chewing out the coach, they're chewing out the other teammates, they're chewing out the opposing team, and they just know better because they're a former high school athlete, you know, and they just know better, and they just know better than everybody, better than the refs, and because they see part of their identity as being a former athlete. And that identity has now affected their behavior, and they can't seem to get out of that identity. Or a mom who is a stay-at-home mom, and all the children have left the home, who is that mom now? Or the 50-year-old dad who has achieved all of his life goals, and so then he just gets a new haircut in a sports car, and enters a midlife crisis. And it's undoing because when one's identity is represented in something apart from Christ, then who is that person when that season is over? That's one concern. The second concern is what happens when the culture that you ascribe to that defines your identity wants to go left, but the Lord has asked you to go right?

Right. And so what if you're you view yourself as aligned with a certain political party, and they they go left, but the Lord has said go right? So if we if we don't have our identity solely in Christ, we're in deep trouble. And Peter knows that. And he's going to write to the first century believers there in modern-day Turkey, in Asia Minor, I use your Asia, in Asia Minor, that's where they are. They, he's going to be writing to them and pleading with them, them. Please have your soul identity saturated in Christ, because that will determine your behavior.

So today we're going to look at four aspects of the identity that the that are found in the passage that Rob read earlier, and do starting in verse 4 through 10. And then we're going to we're going to see a behavior that Peter expects the people to have. If this is your identity, then this is what you ought to do. So we're going to look at that. And that will be the text and the content of our message. So let's look at the first, first of the four things that we are to find our identity in. Notice in verse 4, chapter 2, verse 4 of 1 Peter, we are firstly living stones as Christ is our living stone. Verse 4 reads, as coming to him. Notice Peter is assuming that you are going to come to him. As we come to him, it's, it's an intensity in this word. It's drawing near to Christ that is intimate and personal, and with the intention that remains. As we come to Christ, as we come to him, and notice how it defines Christ a living stone, singular, a living stone. And this living stone, Christ, was rejected by men.

[5:13] But notice the contrast. But in the sight of God, this one that was rejected by men, Christ, he was chosen and precious by God. That Christ was chosen and precious. And then it converted, and then notice in verse 5, why do I say first, our first identity is living stones? Because in verse 5, it says, and you living stones. Christ is the living stone,

singular, we are living stones. And notice what it is, metaphorically speaking, that this, we living stones are being built up into. It says being built up into a spiritual house.

And this living stone that was rejected by the Jewish leaders in the first century, they had contempt for Christ, and they demanded his crucifixion. That's what they did. He was rejected by men. But in the sight of God, he was chosen and precious, and now we are living stones.

Living stones. Living stones. Because of our union with the living stone, we join him in eternal life. We will never die, never face eternal separation, but rather eternal life with Christ. We are living. And this is our first and greatest spiritual privilege that Peter mentions here, is we are living stones. I find it interesting, Paul reiterates this concept in Ephesians 2, 19 through 22. I think this is going to be on the screen. You can read with me. It says this, So then you are no longer strangers or aliens, but you are fellow citizens with saints and members of the household of God. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, there he is, the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is being joined together.

It grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Notice, we are this living stone into this passage here in Ephesians. We're joined together, we're growing together as a holy temple unto the Lord. And in him we have a whole being, our being is being built together. And what I like about this metaphor that is being used is how important each stone is. We take our cue from the cornerstone, who is Christ. He is the one who establishes the plumb line. We're going to get into that in a little bit later. But then the living stones take our cue and take everything from the cornerstone. And we need each other. We need the cornerstone for sure, chiefly. But then we need each other. I need the person on my right and my left, and who is below me, and who is above me as I'm this living stone and being built up into the church.

[7:59] We need each other deeply. Living stones, we need each other. There's an interdependence to who we are. And let's contrast this with the temple that was being used. In the Old Testament temple, it was a temporary structure. It was represented God's presence. It was a material structure.

Physically located in Jerusalem. But we are living stones being built up into a spiritual house that supersedes any building material. You are the building material for the body of Christ. You are the church. And notice it says about this in verse 5, who these living stones are being built up in spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus. We're supposed to offer spiritual sacrifices. Now, that could be a hard concept to understand.

What are our spiritual sacrifices that we are to offer? We're growing into this spiritual house as living stones. We're being built with our cornerstone, Jesus Christ. Well, what is it that we're to do in this spiritual house to offer spiritual sacrifices? What is that?

Well, let's look at seven of them. Firstly, what are our spiritual sacrifices? So what I did this week is I went through the New Testament and found things that are spiritual sacrifices that we offer to the Lord and that are clearly stated in Scripture.

I'm going to begin with the other seven of them that I found. Number one, our bodies. Look with me in Romans 12, verse 1 and 2. I think it's on the screen. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Your body.

[9:56] Offering the totality of who you are unto the Lord. Your mind, your wills, your emotions, your physical body. For the lost, they yield their bodies to sin. For the saved and for the converted in Christ, we offer our bodies as instruments of righteousness to the Lord. Everything we put in and everything we use our members of our bodies for is to be pleasing to the Lord, and that is a spiritual sacrifice. Number two, praise. The spiritual sacrifice of praise. Hebrews 13, verse 15 reads this.

Through him, then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. That is, from the fruit of our lips that acknowledge his name.

When we praise the Lord, I love the opportunity that we had earlier just to sing, and we offered through our lips an opportunity to praise the Lord. But notice this is a sacrifice of praise. That even in a moment of loss, even in a moment of suffering, even in times of grieving, where you may find it more difficult to praise the Lord, perhaps that is a season when you offer a sacrifice of praise to God.

No season of life is exempt from offering praise to the Lord. Third and fourth spiritual sacrifices are mentioned in one verse, Hebrews 13, 16.

And it's good works and our possessions are as a spiritual sacrifice. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

[11:40] There it is. They are sacrifices that are pleasing to God. What are they? To do good and to share possessions. Share what you have. Doing good. Perhaps a word of correction that restores a brother who is sinning.

Loving and helpful action toward another person. Listening and studying God's word. Weeping with those who weep.

Rejoicing with those who rejoice. Doing good and sharing with what you have. Food, shelter, and clothing. Giving up of one's resources to one who is in need.

These are spiritual sacrifices that are pleasing to the Lord. Fifthly, the influence you have had on someone who doesn't know the Christ, whereby they are converted.

So I say it this way, converts. And so we read Romans 15, 15 through 16 reads this. But on some points I have written to you very boldly, by way of reminder, because of the grace that is given me by God.

[12:50] To be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in a priestly service of the gospel of God. So that in the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Paul saw the souls of those God had enabled him to have influence over unto salvation to Christ as a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God.

Who is it that you are influencing unto the Lord? God is the one who saves them. But we are to be a mouthpiece. Sixthly, love.

Your love is a spiritual sacrifice. Ephesians 5, 1 and 2 says this. Be imitators of God, beloved children, and walk in love as Christ has loved us and gave himself up for us, which is a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Love is a spiritual sacrifice. Our own sacrificial love for another, demonstrated selflessly toward others, is very well pleasing to the Lord.

[13:55] A few weeks ago I called Ray Chappell, who is a man in his 80s. And he has been having some procedures done, has landed him in hospitals, and he's now home and he's recovering.

But he's now in a wheelchair for mobility's sake, and just his health is declining. And so I asked him two questions.

I said, Ray, Ray, could you share, what have you found encouraging recently? And how can I be praying for you?

And so he said, oh, encouraging? And he, kind of his voice on the phone, kind of cheered up a little bit. And he said, my men's group.

And I said, well, I said, but have you been able to attend? I didn't think he was able to attend. He goes, no, but they've come to me. They have visited me. So Ken Kerr, and the time when I called him a few weeks ago, Gordon, a member of his men's group, had just left the house.

[15:03] He said, no, Scott, they have just been visiting me. And I found such encouragement in that. It's a sacrifice. It's a spiritual sacrifice to love one another. And I was so blessed by the men in that small group who have been visiting him.

And then lastly, seventh spiritual sacrifice that I find in the New Testament is prayer. Prayer. In Revelation 8, we find this, what I may think of it as a motion picture event in the future, that John the Revelator saw when he appeared into heaven.

He saw something. And notice what he saw. Do you get the picture?

Prayer. There's the Father seated on the throne with a golden altar before him, an incense. And part of the mixture of the incense is prayer. And that aroma was pleasing to the Lord.

Prayer. It's a sacrifice, a spiritual sacrifice that is mentioned. And our identity determines our behavior. Let's keep reading to our second point.

[16:34] Remember, there's four points which our identity is found in this passage. The second one is we're being built into a spiritual house. We've already kind of talked about this, but in verse 5 says, You yourselves, living stones are being built up into a spiritual house.

Look with me in verse 6. For it stands in Scripture that I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whom who believes in him will not be put to shame.

And whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. We're being built up into this spiritual house. The church is the metaphor here. Every living stone takes its cue from someone, and that is the cornerstone.

God laid the cornerstone of the church who is Jesus. This is the metaphor that is being used. It is costly. Notice this cornerstone. It says there's two adjectives here.

It's chosen and precious. It's costly. It's costly. Jesus is costly. He's unequalled in value. He's irreplaceable. It's the most important stone in the whole building.

[17:46] Jesus is God's choice cornerstone. God's chosen one. He is the one. He is the one stone in the house that sets every angle, that is the point of reference for all other buildings, construction.

He is the one that is the point of reference for all things. You go back to what is the cornerstone.

And in this case, Jesus is the cornerstone of the church. He is the one who is the determiner of what is true, right, moral, good.

And by which one can be saved. He is the one who determines that. It's by him. And why do I mention salvation when I talk about Jesus as the cornerstone?

Look at verse 6. I am laying in Zion a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. It is by his name one can be saved.

Whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. In contrast to that, let's think about those who do not believe. The shame that is involved.

[19:07] When one on this side of heaven, or I should say, one who on this earth is confident that there is no God, one day will be put to shame.

The person who is confident that they can achieve heaven by their own merit, one day will be put to shame. The one who is confident that there is salvation in another's name.

Whether that be the name of Allah. Whether that be the name of Buddha. Whether that be the name of the Mormon Jesus. Or a Catholic-based work salvation system. Whatever it is, there's going to be shame.

Speaking to Israel, perhaps this passage can be a taste of what it looks like to not be put to shame. In Isaiah 54, 44-5, we read this. Fear not, for you will not be ashamed. Not be confounded. For you will not be disgraced.

[20:21] For you will forget the shame of your youth and the reproach of your widowhood. You will remember no more. Your maker is your husband. The Lord of hosts is his name.

The Holy One of Israel is your redeemer. The God of the whole earth he is called. What is it that you find reproach in?

What is it that you find some form of shame? Perhaps it will be like it will not even be remembered anymore. One day for those who find their identity in Christ.

Thirdly, we are living stones, a spiritual house, a people of honor. Remember there's four of them. This is the third. People of honor. Look with me in verse 7.

So the honor is for you who believe. But for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. I think about David.

[21:26] David was told he could not build the temple because he was a man of war. And so David wanted to build the temple, but the Lord said, no, your son will. And so David then busied himself to get all the building supplies for the temple.

And all that his son had to do was coordinate the construction because all the supplies were there. Can you imagine David setting out the cornerstone to the temple and saying, Solomon, that's it. That's the cornerstone. Use this one. That's the huge block for you to use. Block of stone that I've quarried just as the cornerstone. Can you imagine Solomon going, no, I think we're going to find another one.

But every other stone that's been quarried takes its reference off of that one. Why would you overlook that? And yet that's the case that we find in Jesus' time in the first century. The first century Jews, the Jewish religious leaders, they were expecting something other than Jesus Christ for their Messiah.

And they rejected him. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. That Jesus that was rejected is now the cornerstone for the church.

[22:40] And it is our greatest honor to know Christ. Look with me in verse 7. So the honor is for you who believe.

I think about how Paul mentions this great honor of knowing Christ. In Philippians 3, verses 8, and then we're going to drop down to verse 10.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.

Verse 10. What is the honor that Paul's thought?

Is to know Christ. To be personally and fully known and love the Lord of glory. To share in the fellowship of his sufferings. To live under his gracious rule and walk in his truth.

[23:55] To treasure him above all else, counting everything lost compared to the surpassing worth of knowing him. And why is this such a big deal?

Because how you see yourself, your identity determines your behavior. So then that brings us to number 4. Our 4th and final point before we get into our behavior.

How does Paul, or how does Peter rather, see here our identity being rooted into? And how is he encouraging those 1st century believers? 4thly, is the people belonging to God.

A people belonging to God. Look with me in verse 10. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people.

Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. You are a people belonging to God. That is our identity for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[24:56] And notice in the bottom of verse 9, he called you out of darkness into the marvelous light. There are two kinds of darkness. Intellectual darkness and a moral darkness.

Intellectual darkness is ignorance, the inability to see and know the truth. A moral darkness is the inability to see and do what is right. And this is the sinful state that believers find themselves in, who are trapped in spiritual darkness.

All people are born in moral darkness. And it's not that they just walk in darkness. They love the darkness. In John 3, 19 through 20, we read this.

And this is the judgment that the light has come into the world. Speaking of Jesus, the people love darkness rather than light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his works be exposed.

Once he had not received mercy, but he had received mercy. I want us to consider a passage in Romans 15 through 16 for a moment.

[26:05] And it's speaking to God's choosing, God's choosing one for salvation. And in Romans chapter 9, and he says this, he says to Moses, I have mercy on whom I have mercy.

I have compassion on whom I have compassion. And then the conclusion then, after that quote that he references that he spoke to Moses, Paul then writes, So then it depends not on human will or exertion.

Let's stop. Your salvation, God's choosing of you, does not depend on human will. That is, someone saying, I want, one cannot will himself unto salvation.

Secondly, it says it's not by human exertion. One cannot do enough good works to achieve salvation. But it depends upon God who has mercy, the passage reads.

So we were all dead in trespasses and sin. We were all in sin, yet God made us alive unto himself. We were all enemies of God. Our salvation is not determined by human will, not determined by human exertion, but solely based on God's mercy.

[27:20] I knew a lady who rescued a horse. The condition of this horse that came to her was very pathetic. It had been abused and mistreated, malnourished.

The ribs, you could see the rib cage of the horse, the hind legs. It was basically a skeleton with flesh, was the condition of the horse when I saw it.

It was sick. The hooves had not been taken care of. And in my mind, that horse was fit for the abattoir or the slaughterhouse just to be put down. That was my conclusion when I looked at the horse.

And yet this woman had mercy on this horse. She brought it into her property, and she was going to see to it that this horse was returned to health.

So I want to speak to this concept of mercy because the verse 10 says, once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

[28:23] So let's talk a little bit about mercy for us to appreciate it. Mercy, firstly, begins with seeing misery. Mercy begins with seeing the need.

We were spiritually broken. We were blinded. We were rebellious. We were miserable in condition, just like that horse. Second, mercy then moves toward the undeserving.

There was something about this horse that she saw that I did not. It needed mercy, but I had a different conclusion for this horse. But she moved toward the undeserving horse.

God's mercy moves toward us. The unworthy, not the worthy. And we read in Romans 5.8, that God has shown his love toward us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

We were sinners. We were miserable. The undeserving nature of the rescued is the very context for mercy to shine forth.

[29:29] And so thirdly, we read, or we understand that mercy acts at personal cost. There is a cost to restoring the broken.

God did not spare his own son for salvation. God's mercy took the full cost of our redemption at the death of his son. And then thirdly, mercy restores the dignity and the belonging.

The horse was not merely spared from death. It was given a new life. She, this rancher, had so many beautiful pastures that were now available to this horse.

It had all the food and clean water, the care, the loving responses of its owners, and it was being able to be socialized with other animals. And all that horse ever knew after that point of coming into that ranch was just love.

And so mercy restores dignity and belonging. That's what Christ has done to us, brought us into his family, restores dignity, restores belonging to us.

[30:42] And then lastly, mercy glorifies the restorer. That horse, if it could, should only honor, glory, praise that rancher woman because she had mercy on that horse.

All glory goes to that lady in the horse's case. Not in ours. In our case, all the glory goes to the rescuer who is the chief cornerstone.

It is, he is our point of reference for all things. All glory goes to him. We were once, we had not received mercy, but now have received mercy because he chose us like this woman who chose the horse.

I say it this way. I say it this way. We are a people who belong to God as unworthy, glad recipients of God's mercy.

I'm an unworthy, but oh so glad, happy recipient of God's mercy. And so all glory goes to God for my salvation and my belonging in him and my identity in him.

[32:19] So, what is your identity? We've looked at four facets. We're living stones, spiritual temple, people of honor, people belonging to God. So then what is the expected response of that?

How should that affect our behavior? What is, what should be so natural about that? Verse nine, we could have gone into these other places of identity, but I skipped over these.

Chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, a people of his own possession. And then here's the purpose clause. What's the behavior? That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

That you may proclaim the excellencies of him. There is no higher privilege to be one that heralds, communicates, shares the gospel, the good news of Christ to others.

There is no higher privilege. It ought to be, because our identity is in Christ, it ought to be the most natural thing that flows from us is to proclaim the excellencies of him. This word excellencies, or to proclaim, is to publish, to advertise.

[33:36] It's the only time in the New Testament that this particular word is used to proclaim, is to publish, to advertise, and to do so with a sense of someone otherwise who doesn't know. I'll give you an example.

In my own life, this summer, I came into the knowledge of something that I couldn't help but share with others because it was such good news. And you're going to get a little window into Scott's life of what he thinks is important here.

Avista was offering a rebate for its insulation. And my neighbor said, hey, Scott, do you know how much insulation is in your ceiling and you should have it blown in because Avista is offering a rebate?

It's free. I didn't believe him. Checked out the Avista website. Sure enough, it was true. contacted the contractor that he recommended me and he came, gave me a bid, and sure enough, I got some free insulation blown in.

Nothing. Cost me nothing. So I was so excited about this. I was telling the whole staff, hey, guys, did you know, are you on Avista?

[34:41] You got to check this out. They got free insulation. It was the easiest thing for me to do as a recipient of mercy is to communicate something that was so easy.

I told everyone about it. I sent some emails to people. I'm like, you should check this out. I think you're on Avista. I don't know if they're still offering the rebate.

Excellencies. Excellencies. We are to proclaim the excellencies of him. Excellencies is this ability to perform powerful or heroic deeds.

Let me see if you think this is powerful or heroic. God in three persons. Before time set his affection on you.

But in order to redeem you as someone sinful, he would have to send his son. So in history, he condescended to earth.

[35:57] The second person of the Godhead condescended to earth. taking on human flesh. Fully God. Fully man.

Living a sinless life yet tempted in all ways without sin. Powerful. Heroic. And died a death in my place.

Taking the wrath of God for sin in my stead. the sinless for the sinful.

The innocent he died for the guilty. Death could not hold him though and three days later he rose from the grave.

Powerful. Heroic. And then ascended to the right hand of the father with a promise of one day returning. I don't know about you but that's powerful.

[37:00] that's heroic. That's his excellencies. So the behavior of us with our identity of being living stone spiritual temple a people of honor people who belong to God our responsibility to that a natural response to that is to proclaim his excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into the marvelous light.

That's what we do as believers in Christ. that's our identity and that's the expected and anticipated behavior. What other God exists?

What other God could send his son to die? What other creator could die for his creation? Who else could live a sinless life and make himself a worthy perfect sacrifice?

Who else can do this? Who could die for the penalty of sin and rise alive from the dead? Who else? God chose unworthy glad recipients of his mercy as his representatives to tell other sinners the good news of God's extraordinary work on their behalf?

That's our response. So I ask the question, if I don't proclaim the excellencies of Christ, what should be some things to consider?

[38:29] Number one, perhaps you don't know the Lord. Perhaps you haven't been a recipient of God's mercy and I plead with you today to receive Jesus Christ who has paid the penalty of sin on your behalf.

Secondly, maybe you derive your primary identity from something other than Christ. Perhaps an idol in your life has been exposed.

Maybe you cherish your reputation or being well thought of by others as more important. Perhaps a competing affection has been revealed.

I want to conclude with how the Apostle Paul declares the excellencies of him to his young protege Timothy in 1 Timothy 1 12-17 and this is how we'll close the service.

Listen to how Paul proclaims the excellencies of him. I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service.

[39:40] I formerly was a blasphemer, persecutor, and an insolent opponent, but I have received mercy because I acted ignorantly and unbelief.

And the grace of the Lord overflowed to me with the faith and the love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

But I received mercy for this reason that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

To the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

So would you pray with me?

Identity determines our behavior. Father, Father, I pray that we would be a people who would find it oh so easy to proclaim the excellencies of Christ.

[40:51] Lord, what you have done on our behalf is incomprehensible, is immeasurable. None compares to you. And I pray that it would be easier for us to speak of you than a Navista rebate.

That we would find it easier to speak of you than anything else because we primarily derive our identity from you. You are the cornerstone. You are our point of reference for all things.

We love you, Lord. Thank you for this beautiful day and it's in your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.