

Living Stones

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[0 : 0 0] verses. And you can say to people, well, that's what it means to become a Christian. But people may say, well, how do you define it? What's it like being a Christian? And in this chapter, we have some of the kind of definitions of what it is to be a Christian. And we're just going to look through a wee bit of this. In verse 2, Peter tells us that the Christian is like a newborn infant. And then in verse 5, the Christian is like a living stone being built into a spiritual house.

So these are some of the kind of definitions that Peter is giving of what it's like to be a Christian. Now, one of the things that Peter has emphasized, just like the other gospel writers, just like Paul and like John and like James, is the importance of having love one for another. We saw that last time since having purified, verse 22 of chapter 1, having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart. And that's one of the things that's at the very center of the Christian life, is that love. We saw that there were different, there are different types of love. And there is this self-sacrificial love.

That here, your minister has been going through Ephesians at night, and the responsibility of the husbands to love the wives as Christ loved the church, a self-sacrificial love, the giving of himself entirely. And that self-sacrificial love is at the very heart of our love. It's an imitation of, I shouldn't say it, if you get me right, it is mirroring, I should say, more the love that God has for us. Now, in this chapter, the apostle says that there are certain practices, we'll see that just in a moment, that we should lay aside, or to put away all these things like malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander and these things. And then we are to be those who have like little infants.

Now, a passion comes into the kingdom. A passion comes into spiritual life, just like a passion comes into natural life. When we arrive in this world, we arrive by way of birth. And it's natural. That's how we came into this world, by birth. And Jesus shocked Nicodemus. When Nicodemus came to Jesus one night, and he said to Jesus, you know, I really am confused about things. And Jesus said to him, except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. And Nicodemus was a clever man. He was a man who studied, he was a ruler amongst the Pharisees, and he understood many things. But at this, he was absolutely perplexed. And he's asking the question. He was kind of thinking, I just don't understand what Jesus is saying. How can a person be born a second time? It seemed to Nicodemus just to, that it was as if Jesus was speaking in riddles. But Jesus goes on to explain that it's being born from above.

[3 : 3 9] And Peter is highlighting this, that we are born not of perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living and abiding word of God. Every person who is born again is born in the same way.

The Father's giving, the Spirit, the Holy Spirit applying the word into our heart. The whole Godhead is involved, Father, Son, and Spirit. And the Holy Spirit touches our heart. Now, we might not be aware of it at the time. We are not thinking when we come to faith, oh, that's the Holy Spirit at work in me just now. We don't think like that. But what happens is, very simply, our hearts are being opened to see that this word is real, and that this is our word that is to be believed, that this is our word that we want in us, and we're led to trust and to believe in Jesus, who is the word. And as we've said on many occasions, that can happen very quickly, or it can happen over a process of time. It happens the actual moment of the new birth, with what we would term regeneration, happens in a moment, but the outworking of it, in our experience, our understanding of it, may take quite a long time. So that there are periods where we, it's just like in the, in the, used the example before of the morning light, when dawn breaks. It's very hard to say exactly at what moment the light really broke in. Because if you're out all the time, it's, it's moving from a world of darkness into shadows, into shapes that are taking, you're beginning to understand, you're saying,

oh, that's the tree there, and these are the rocks, and oh, now you're beginning to see things, the shadows are giving way to actual reality and shape. And then all of a sudden, you can see everything quite clearly. But you can't remember exactly at what moment that happened. And that is often what happens when people come to faith, that they say, you know, I'm seeing things that I didn't see before. I'm beginning to understand things I didn't understand before. And sometimes you will hear people in church, and they'll say, you know, I don't know what's happening to the minister, but he's getting more interesting. No, it's, it's, you know what it is? It's that the Holy Spirit is opening that patient's heart, opening their understanding to see and to believe. And some people, when they come, and this is one of the things, when we come to the communion as we're coming this weekend, an invitation has always been given to people to come to, who want to sit at the Lord's table for the first time. And those who have come to a saving faith, faith in Christ Jesus. And some people find it a wee bit off-putting, maybe coming to a session, and they say, oh, I'm too scared to do that. But you know, one of the great things is this. We read that in Romans, that we are to believe in our heart and confess with our mouth. And really, at the end of the day, that's all that the Kirk session is wanting to hear, is that confession of faith. They're wanting to hear from that person themselves, that they have come to believe and to accept Jesus Christ as Savior, and to make that confession.

Because the Bible is quite, the Bible puts a lot of emphasis upon our confession of faith. We need to confess. We need to, we need to confess before men. It's important. And so, here is this great opportunity. And if I could say to anybody today who might be thinking along these lines, ask if you have come to trust the Lord. And you might be saying, I can't, I can't go to the session. I can't tell the day or the hour. I can't tell the date. I can't. I hear some people say, and they say, oh, I was, I was converted on such and such a date. I can't do that. And so, people will say, I can't come to the session. That's, the session doesn't look. And other believers don't look for a particular day or date. They're looking for that confession. And you're able to say, well, like the blind man, you know, I was once spiritually blind. But I now see. I see a Savior. I believe in Him. I've trusted my life to Him to take away my sin. And that's, that's what we have to do. That's this salvation. And so, Peter emphasizes the importance of new birth. We have to have this. We have to be born again, have to be born from above.

[9 : 02] And so, Peter says, we're like newborn infants. And these newborn infants long for the pure spiritual milk in order that you may grow up to salvation. Now, of course, we know that when a baby is born, that's what a baby's diet is. It's a diet of milk. And that's where, to a baby, the milk gives what they need, the nourishment, the strength, the support. And through that milk, they begin to grow.

And it's, and that's, Peter is using that description to describe how it is for the believer. And this milk for us is a word. This is, this is it. It's as simple as that. So that we find ourselves going into the word and we won't grow as Christians if we sort of don't bother with the word. If you want to grow and if I want to grow, we must be in the word. We must read it. We must pray over it.

We must study it. We must meditate upon it. I've often said that. I really believe meditation is so important, where you will take not a huge section of God's word, but a small part. And try yourself in your mind to understand what it is saying. Now, I know that you can get lots of books that help you, but yes, they're important, but often try you yourself and ask the Lord, Lord, open my mind.

May your spirit today open my mind to understand what this truth is saying so that it will become part of my life, not just for my head, but for my heart. Not just so that I will have it in here, but that I will live it. And the Lord will answer that prayer because he wants you and he wants me to grow.

And so this is one of the ways. If we keep our Bibles closed and only look at them now and again, we won't be growing. So it's imperative that we grow. So Peter is saying this is important. But at the beginning, he says, along with the positives of taking on board all the word, put away, he said, malice and deceit and envy and all these things. Very simply run through these things. Malice is simply where we could say being bad, where we desire hurt towards other people. Deceit is, I suppose, very simply is being devious. Where we say one thing, but we mean another. Where you try to wrong foot people deliberately. The word is literally catching with bait. So where you're trying to, you're being deceptive, deliberately so, so that a person is wrong footed. Hypocrisy is very simply making out that we're something that we're not. Envy, as we know, is a bad attitude to others, to their passion, to what they have, to their prosperity. And you know, to a certain extent, all these words, malice, where we're seeing intending harm to others, the deceit, the hypocrisy, the

end. They all, I would say, find the root in envy. Where we have something against people. Slander. Evil speaking. Where we say things that are wrong. We have a half-truth. And we add to it ourselves. We make out, and you know it's such a dangerous thing, that one, isn't it? Where we know a bit of the fact, where we know some of the facts. And we make up the rest ourselves. And as we know, so often, when we add the two and two, we get 77. We are invariably wrong. But because we know a little, and we make up the rest ourselves, we think we're right. And so often, we are wrong. And it's not just something that we shouldn't be doing, really. We're told, put them away. That's what Peter says.

[13:27] These things shouldn't be part of your life. They're gone. These are things we have to pray over. And ask the Lord. And say, Lord, grant me the grace.

Because remember, our words are important. And these things are attitudes of heart. And they're all things to do with our heart and with our mouth. These are things that are brought before us regarding the judgment. We were going to be judged by our words. So it's very careful. We have to be careful what we say about other people. We can destroy people's reputations so easily with half-truths, with what we say. Be very careful. We've often said this before. Remember how it's talking about Naaman, the great man. He was the top man in Syria. Mighty man, powerful man, loyal man. But he was a leper.

When you mention Naaman, do you think that he was the greatest general that Syria had for years? No. Do you think he was an incredibly loyal man? No. Do you think of him automatically as this amazing leader? No. Do you think of him as a leper? And that's the way we are.

There's all these good things about this person, but, whoa, we home in on the but, the bad thing. That's why the Bible is so clear. That we're to put these things away. To be done with.

And if we're going to say things, let us seek to try and say good things about people. So here is the believer, is someone like a newborn infant. And one of the things about a newborn infant, it's somebody who is absolutely helpless. Can't do for himself or herself. If you just leave the baby and don't tend to it, that baby can't wash itself. That baby cannot feed itself. Can't do anything.

[15:37] And what a picture that is of the way we come into the kingdom. And that's part of the problem, you know. This is a big problem that faces people.

Because in order to become a Christian, we have to come to this place where we need someone else. And you know, that goes against the grain.

Because we, by nature, are independent people. We are self-reliant. We like to be in control of our lives.

But the Lord is saying, in order to really follow me, that self has to be broken. You have to come to me like a newborn infant.

Helpless. You have to come realizing that there is no hope for you unless I will save you. That's really what the Lord is saying. So we come, as time's moving on, as newborn infants.

[16:42] And then we see in verse 4 that we are like a living stone. Or verse 5. We find, first of all, it gives this description, first of Christ. As you come to him, a living stone, rejected by men.

And as we see then in verse 6, behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious. And, of course, that is speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ. But we, we see here, you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house.

Now, it's quite interesting that we're being, the Christian is described as a stone, because a stone, as we know, is an inanimate object. But we're told here this, it's a living stone.

And this living stone, or these living stones, are built upon the living stone, who is Jesus. He is, as has been said elsewhere, the cornerstone.

When these, when the houses used to be built, there was, there was this foundational stone. This is the corner. This is where all the sort of the focus and the weight.

[17:55] That corner here is, as it were, where the very weight of the building is to be. If that is wrong, the rest of the building will be wrong. And that's how it is with Jesus.

Jesus is the one that you and I must build our life upon. If not, our life will collapse. Jesus said that in the Sermon on the Mount. Remember how he was describing it about those who are building their lives on the sand, and those who are building upon the rock.

And it doesn't matter how beautiful the building is on the sand. When the storms come, that building will collapse. And my friend, if you're building for life, and you don't have a foundation, irrespective of how prosperous or how well things are going, it's going to collapse unless you get a good

foundation under.

And Jesus Christ is that foundation. So we are living stones, as it were, stones quarried out of the pit of sin.

And we're being built into this house. It's like the, you know, the way the houses used to be built. Nowadays, we have a, you have your cement blocks, or you have your bricks.

[19 : 12] But in the old days, you see these, the old type of houses that were built just with the stones, the same as like the dry stone dyke walls. Massive stones.

And you look at these, my father was in, in Burstown in Carlaway, and where the old house is, where he was born, it's now falling to ruins, but that house is there.

Where his grandfather was, it's further back. And again, that's in a worse state of ruin. But what amazed me when I look at it, some of the stones are absolutely massive, and you wonder, how on earth did they get them there?

But the amazing thing is the precision. And these, these buildings, they were so strong, they were immovable. But when you looked at them, there were, there was a tremendous art.

In, in building these walls, and building these, these houses. But there were massive stones. And there were smaller stones. And every stone was important.

[20 : 21] And if you go, for instance, to a dry stone dyke wall, and look at it, you'll say, that's great. But if there's a stone missing, straight away, your eye will notice and say, oh, stone missing there.

The Lord Jesus is building his house. And it's like that. And he's fitting every piece in together, into this spiritual building. And every single piece is important.

The great big ones, but also the little tiny ones. And we've got to try and understand that. Every stone has its place, and its part to play.

And that's how it is in the church of Jesus Christ. Everybody's important. People have different roles, and different works, according to their different abilities. But each one is important.

My friend, you're important. The Lord has a place for you. He has a role for you. And we've got to understand that. Not everybody is a hundredfold fruit bearer.

[21 : 24] Jesus said that in the parable of the sower. Good seed will fall into the ground, and it will spring up, and it will grow. And you will get fruit.

Some will produce a hundredfold. I'm sure we would all like to be a hundredfold producing Christians, but we won't all be. Some will produce 60.

Some will produce 30. And the church has got to realize that. That everybody isn't going to be making the same advancement, the same advances.

People are going to be growing at different levels. People will be bearing fruit at different levels. So Jesus tells us that. But at the end of the day, remember there's only going to be one church.

And that church is built in Jesus Christ. And every member of that church Jesus died for, every member of that church Jesus sees as precious.

[22 : 28] But then finally, as the time is moving on, we see that it says here, Behold, I am laying in Zion a cornerstone and a cornerstone chosen and precious.

And whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. If your life has been built upon Jesus, your life will not be put to shame.

I love that. Shame is one of the things that troubles us in life. Sin brings shame. All of us look back on our lives.

And there are things we say, I wish I had never done. I'm ashamed of that. Nobody has ever gone through their life saying, I've never been ashamed of anything I've ever done.

I don't believe, I wouldn't, I wouldn't believe if somebody said that to me. I've never, I've never been ashamed of anything I've ever done. Shame is part of life.

[23 : 27] Shame came in with sin. Remember when Adam and Eve were in the garden and it was perfect. Sin hadn't entered. One of the things it tells us, they were not ashamed.

They were there together in their nakedness. They were not ashamed. It's when sin came in, that shame came in as well.

And this is one of the things that Jesus has done for us. guilt and shame are tied together. Jesus on the cross bore our guilt.

And he bore our shame. And you know, at the end of the day, you know what it says of Jesus? That he's not ashamed to call us brothers.

