

In **1 Peter 2:1-3**, the Spirit cried out to all those who are still spiritual babies, infants, to long for and to indulge in the milk of the word—it was a command—so that you may grow up to maturity where you no longer live for the “Me” but live for others. You must grow up and transition from the milk of the word to the meat of the word or else you will not successfully make the jump to living like a true child of God, an alien on this earth. Some of you are full-on babies and some of you are sort of mutated babies with 1 long leg and 1 long arm and 1 baby leg and 1 baby arm. You have grown solid in certain areas of your life but in other areas you are still an infant, which is totally awkward and makes walking very difficult if not impossible. You are always stumbling and having to be taken care of by others as you are practically unable to care for yourself much less anyone else on any sustained basis. This just means that some of the very basic truths of the word—the milk—have not yet become your truth.

In thinking about this, I realize that most people still stumble over believing two foundational truths in terms of their relationship with God—two truths which keeps them from advancing to the next stage of maturity or allowing them to move on to other key truths of the milk of the word. I have captured this in two questions and I know we have gone over this so many times but it is still a problem, so bear with me. If you are still infantile in any capacity, then please open your heart and your mind to the Spirit. 1) Has Jesus really been in control over everything in my life; and, even now, is He in control? 2) If He is in control, how can He be a good God since I like very little of what I have been through in my life? These two issues seem to trip people up over and over and over again.

Here is the deal; if we can't trust that He is in control and that He is good and

always chooses the best pathways for our lives, then we will never be able to accept the fact that He loves us, forgives us, and desires us the way He says He does. In effect, grace becomes a non-issue if we cannot get past these first two foundational issues. Yet, so many things in our mind and emotions fight against the truth that Jesus is our Lord and Jesus is good, including the ever so demonic “victim mentality” which tends to blanket our brains. If you honestly think that things in your life should have or could have been different (which is the *envy* we talked about last week that must be put away), then I am afraid to say that you have allowed your mind to be blanketed with the victim mentality.

When you accept the fact that 1) you are chosen and precious to God, which is some of the milk we are going to address in this passage, and 2) that you are an alien in this world, then everything and I mean everything He has allowed and done in your life, and is even now doing, can start to make sense. It is to help you live as an alien—to live as a child of God separated from the attachments of this world. Thus, whether or not you like what you have been through or are going through, from the perspective of your being transformed into the image of God, it is good. I want you to drink of this milk. Drink and drink and drink until you are ready to transition to solid food. I want you to ask the Spirit to cement in your heart these truths: you are chosen, you are precious, He is in control over every aspect of your life, and He always chooses the best pathways for your life—always; the pathway that leads you to knowing and experiencing more of Him.

### **1 Peter 2:4-8**

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is

choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

This entire passage is rich with deep spiritual truths. First, in coming to Him as to a living stone, "coming" is in the *present middle participle*. The point is that we are digging deep into our souls and making the choice to come to Him and to keep coming to Him. No one is forcing us. And this is not just a statement on what we do; rather, it is a picture of the nature of our relationship. He is our living stone and we choose to come to Him. Jesus has been rejected by men the world over, but He is choice or chosen and precious in the sight of God and He has become choice and precious to each of us. We come to Him and we keep coming to Him because we want to; we have decided that there is nowhere else to go and no one else to turn to—He is it. We have made our decision.

This idiom of a living stone is used both in talking about Jesus and us. Understanding how the image is used in terms of the relationship between Jesus and us will then help us understand how this image is used in terms of the relationship between us and others. We come not to a temple made of stone, we

do not bow before a wood or stone statue; rather, we come to a living God. And when you think about the attributes of stone, we come to a living God upon whom we can build our lives, hide behind for safety, and put all our weight on and more without worry of it cracking or breaking. This stone can be depended upon always because it does not move; it is stable, secure, and very, very strong. This is what Jesus is like which is why we come and keep coming to Him. No one else can claim to have these attributes; just Jesus.

We come to a living stone that has been rejected by men. Personally, I believe this is not just talking about what happened in Jerusalem but men, world over, have rejected Jesus and it is given to us in the *perfect passive participle*. That means it was a decision made long ago, from before time (*perfect tense*), God enforces that decision (hence the use of the *passive voice*), and that decision continues on even today (*the participle*). Remember, as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and the all knowing God who sits outside of time, Jesus foreknew all who would ever come to Him and receive Him as well as all who would ever reject Him. According to that fore-knowledge He predestined the affairs of life to ensure this decision—either way—is carried out (**Romans 8:29-30**). As such we come to Him and choose Him whereas others outright reject Him.

Now, I am going to jump to **1 Peter 2:7-8** and come back to **5-6** since it is going to be easier for me to organize the flow of the discussion this way since **5-6** and **9-10** flow together and **7-8** is kind of a parenthetical about those who have rejected Jesus. “But for those who disbelieve, THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone, and, A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word,

and to this doom they were also appointed.”

There is an old story, who knows perhaps it is legend, which connects all this imagery. But first you have to understand a little bit about ancient masonry since in those days things were built with large stones and bricks. The image comes from the ancient quarries where highly-trained stonemasons carefully chose the stones used in construction. No stone was more important than the cornerstone, also referred to as a capstone, because the integrity of the whole structure depended on the cornerstone having exceptional structural integrity while containing exactly the right lines or angles.

In other words, if there was any evidence that the chosen stone might crack or chip, it was rejected. If the cornerstone was not exactly right, the entire building would be out of line, and it would be rejected. For that reason, builders inspected many stones, rejecting each one until they found the one they wanted. Rejected stones might be used in other parts of the building, but they would never become the cornerstone or the capstone (the first and last stones put in place). For example, have you ever seen an old Roman arch bridge? The triangle stone in the middle of the arch is the cornerstone or the capstone. All the pressure of both sides of the structure is placed on this one stone and it is the center piece upon which all strength and integrity of the bridge lies.

**1 Peter 2:7** is a quote from **Psalm 118:22**: The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone. The legend of this stone goes back to the days of Solomon when he was constructing the Temple according to David’s design. Solomon was very particular about how things must be done and he ordered that no saw or hammer could be used on this building, and no chisel.

There was to be no bothersome construction noises as this building was erected. Therefore, all of the materials were pre-cut and measured, and then brought to Jerusalem and put perfectly into place; the building was erected like a prefabricated house.

According to the story, there was a huge communication mishap. A great large stone was sent to Jerusalem by the stone masons out at the quarry. The builders could not figure out where the stone was to go so they moved it over to the side awaiting further instruction. But the stone seemed to always be in the way of their construction efforts. Literally, people kept stumbling over it or had to go around it, which tended to annoy everyone. Eventually, someone concluded that since the stone did not seem to fit it must have been delivered to the wrong construction site; so they moved the stone over to the edge of the mountain and just pushed it over. It tumbled down to the Kidron Valley and was quickly forgotten. Finally, as the building neared completion, the builders sent word to the quarry that they were ready for the cornerstone. The masons sent back word that they had already sent the cornerstone to them. Then they remembered the big stone that they pushed over the mountain—oops. They searched for it and finally found that large stone and recovered it, brought it back and it fit perfectly into place.

This is the story behind the scripture: "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone." Previously, Peter made it clear that this stone, this corner stone, was none other than Jesus himself.

**Acts 4:8-12**

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead — by this name this man stands here before you in good health. "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone. "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

In other words, the lines and structural integrity of this rock is perfect. Everything can depend upon it. It has the strength, it has the design, it can fulfill its purpose, and it can bear the weight. Thus, there is no other name, no other rock, under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. He is it. But since men have refused to deal with this stone and set it in place in their lives, He has become "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE." People are always trying to get around him and seeing as that is difficult, they just push him over the edge of their lives so they never have to see Him or think of Him. It says they stumble because they are disobedient to the word. To what word were they disobedient?

***Isaiah 8:13-15***

It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, and He shall be your dread. Then He shall become a sanctuary; but to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, and a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Many will stumble over them, then they will fall and be broken; they will even be snared and caught.

It was all predicted, they were warned, and still they were disobedient to the word; and to this doom they were also appointed; yes, appointed. Paul tells us that they are vessels of wrath prepared for destruction (***Romans 9:22***). They have been brought into this world such that God might “make know the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles” (***Romans 9:23-25***). In other words, God has honored their choice and they are in this world as tools to prove to us the great extent of God’s love for us—the vessels of mercy who were prepared beforehand for glory.

This is mind blowing. God is willing for our sake to be patient with these vessels of wrath, even though He is ready and willing to judge their deeds. Yet, He is patient with them so we might come to know the riches of His glory so that the truth might become our truth. I hope you understand that when it is all said and done, everything is about Jesus and His bride: that is how much Jesus loves and adores you. We have learned this. We must get this into our heads so we can start living obedient to the word and embrace the glory to which we have been appointed.



***Romans 9:30-33***

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

The consequences of rejecting Jesus and trying to be good without the cross is huge, gigantic, and something that will not be undone. Sadly, tragically, if you reject Jesus, you will face your doom; but understand, it is for all eternity. In talking to the chief priests, Pharisees, elders, and the larger assembly (all those who identified themselves as the people of God), Jesus said it this way:

***Matthew 21:42-44***

Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.

Jesus is the rock. If you want to read an awesome description of Him as our rock, go study **Deuteronomy 32**. You can choose to come to this living stone and fall on this rock and you will be broken. If you come to Jesus this is a guarantee. The rock is hard, it does not budge, and when push comes to shove, the rock always wins. Those of us who have thrown ourselves on the rock have been broken; but it has been merciful and beautiful and all part of God teaching us how to live as aliens on this earth—as sons of God. He has broken off the parts of us that are not needed; the parts that limit our ability to live as supernatural beings; the parts that thwart our ability to know and rest in His love.

But for those upon whom the rock falls, which is a picture of judgment, it will crush; it will devastate; it will demolish; and it will entirely destroy and scatter them like dust. There will be no recovery for those upon whom the rock falls. We studied this in the book of **Revelation** and it is an awful reality. You don't want to be one of those people who reject the living stone.

Clearly, all these passages make two distinct points. 1) Trust in Jesus. Fall on Him. He can handle the pressure and the weight. Nothing you have is too much for Him. He is the one whom God has appointed and He is choice and precious and is the only one; there is no other name under heaven by which men can be saved. 2) If you refuse to trust yourself to Jesus, if you reject Him the way man has done over and over again, you will face eternal doom and this destruction will be experienced for all eternity. The prophecy is clear: He wins. No matter how resolute you are in your view point of life and eternity, it really does not matter. It will be crushed under the reality of His weightiness.

Like so many others, you may be offended by these truths, and that is what the scriptures say you will be. But get over it; forget your feelings. The consequences of ignoring these truths are devastating. But the choice is still always up to you; God will not force you to believe. Remember, “And coming to Him” is in the *middle* voice, a choice you must dig deep down inside your soul to make. Now, you might be confused as to why I say it is your choice if “rejected by men” is in the *perfect passive participle* and **Romans 9** says those who reject Jesus were appointed for wrath. I have to say that both are true. The Bible never takes this decision out of the hands of man nor the hands of God; and it is passages like this that plead with you to drop your pride and accept Jesus. Throw yourself on the rock and be broken; it is far, far, far better than being crushed. Here is Jesus’ perspective on the matter:

***Matthew 7:24-27***

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell — and great was its fall.

The implication is that you have now heard and you get to choose what you are

going to do with this truth. You can accept it and come to this living stone or reject it and your fall will be great. But this is as much in your hands as it is in God's hands. You will not be able to blame Him for your eternity, as His judgment is just and true. You will experience for eternity what you have already chosen.

Now for those who believe, which is the point of this entire discourse (again, the part about those who disbelieve was a parenthetical to this thought), these truths are to be mind altering such that our emotions begin to catch up with our spiritual reality in order that we might live this truth: like Jesus, we are chosen and precious to God.

### **1 Peter 2:5-6**

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." This precious value, then, is for you who believe.

We are living stones. When we trusted Jesus, we were created new in His nature; or better said, we were given a new nature that is in His image righteous, holy, and true (***Ephesians 4:20***). Thus, as He is a living stone, so are we. Therefore, we are to be people who are stable, secure and very, very strong. Others should be able to build their lives upon the rock as they see our lives secure in the rock. They should be able to hide behind us for safety and put all their weight upon us

without worry of our cracking or breaking. We are to be like a stone that does not move but is consistent and fully dependable.

We are living stones; we are being fitted together as part of this holy house. In fact, we are being made into the very dwelling place of God in the Spirit. You see God no longer inhabits a stone structure as He did in the past; He inhabits people. This is a new era; it is no longer God with man but God in man. We have become the temple of God, both individually and collectively. **1 Corinthians 3:16-17** and **6:19** both say that you are the temple of God for the Spirit of God and of glory dwells in you. And according to **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** and **Ephesians 2:20**, we collectively are the temple of God as His Spirit dwells among us. This is simply amazing. And like the temple of old, we are to be that place, individually and collectively, where people come to meet the living God. We are to be that place that they come to find hope, to find answers, to rejoice, to celebrate, and to give honor to the living God.

This is why it is critical that we drink and drink the milk of the word until the foundational truths about our lives in Christ become our truths. Otherwise when people come to us they won't encounter the living God, but they will just have an encounter with a religious person who is pretty stuck and obsessed with themselves. Think about it; that is so lame and a tired old experience that has hardened people in their rebellion to God. Selfish Christian phonies are a dime a dozen; people want proof of the living God through people who dwell with Him.

We are being built up into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. This is happening now; "built up" is in the *present passive indicative*. God is doing it and that is a

statement of fact. Overall, this sentence is crazy. There is so much here it is so hard to get my mind around. First, we are being built up into a house; a dwelling place. Some of your translations may say “temple” but technically that is not accurate; the Greek is literally a house. We are being built up into a relational structure that we and others can all home, wherein we can make our abode and experience the depth of intimacy and safety that one would expect in a house where God dwells. It is a place to be known by others and to know others. It is a place where we can safely grow up in the Lord and mature. It is a place to be fed, to rest, to run to, and to support so that way the household can be provided for and function. It is a place to serve and to be served. It is a place to find solace in tragedy, relief in pain, healing in sickness, and a place to rejoice and celebrate over your life and the lives of others in the household. It is a place to worship the Lord individually and together. It is a place to cry out to Jesus, to bring Him our cares, and to let ourselves be loved on by Him through others in the household and to love others by Him in the household. This is what we are being built into; this is the kind of House God is creating. How fantastic is that?

Second, we are being built into a *spiritual* house. This means we are not a common house, we are not a house formed from things or people from this world; rather, we are set apart as something out of this world. We are a spiritual house and the implications of this truth are incredible—as are the practical implications to your life.

### ***2 Corinthians 6:14-18***

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have

righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; and I will welcome you." And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

Talk about driving home the point that we are aliens and strangers on this earth; this is so intense. There is no fellowship between us and those who are beholden to the world and worship a different Jesus or other so called gods. We simply do not mix. We are called out of all of that mess; and the Lord expects us to come out from their midst and be separate. This is not a suggestion but an expectation of how we are to live in this world. And this notion crosses every line of relational intimacy that is out there; it is not just limited to who you marry. It is about being bound together, in any manner, with those who abide in darkness, lawlessness, who worship other gods, are unbelievers, and are connected to the demons behind the false gods.

As such, every kind of human relationship (whether it be family, work, romance, etc.) is captured in this notion of separation. With that said, we live in the world and God sent us to this world, so this idea of separation is not talking about our needing to develop communes and erect really big walls to keep people

out; absolutely not! Rather, this speaks of relational intimacy and commitment—where we make our abode. We are to make the decision to be bound only to one another—to those of like nature—and similarly to not be bound outside of that approved relationship. Having relationships and being bound in relationships are two different things. The idea is that as members of a *spiritual* house, we must not be unequally yoked. The picture would be of a farmer who is trying to plow the field with a cow on one side of the yoke and a goat on the other. The tension is all wrong; and there will be no way to balance things out; it is impossible.

This is one of those commands (yes, it is an *imperative* and it is in the *middle* voice meaning it is our decision) that people seem to take as a suggestion and people enter into all sorts of committed bound relationships with people in order to get along in this world, to “make it” big, and many times just to “survive.” This is not right given the fact that we belong to a spiritual house and it is to be the things of that Spirit of God which binds us together in intimacy, fellowship, and commitment. Think though this truth; as it is to be your truth. God is in control of your life, He is in control of your destiny; thus, your intimacy, fellowship, and commitment are to be shared with those who are of like nature bound by the Spirit of God.

And the reason we are to be separate and bound this way is that not only are we part of a spiritual house, but we are also part of the Lord’s holy, or set apart, priesthood. The place that was once exclusively occupied by the tribe of Levi and the decedents of Aaron has not been conferred upon us. This is a very heady truth and again, a powerful reason why we are to live as aliens in this world, separated, bound together in the Spirit of God. There is a lot for us to discover about this



holy priesthood and the spiritual sacrifices for which we are responsible, but we will wait and pick this up again next week as we further explore our separation.

Let's Pray