

Book	1-Peter
Study	Study 6
Topic	The Living Stones
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Whenever you look at the Bible, there is always a doctrinal part which is the theoretical basis upon which your behaviour then emanates from. Because of your new birth and living hope and special status you have, you are exalted to holy living, exalted to love deeply due to a new nature and exaltation to grow. Since you have tasted the goodness of Lord and you continue to strive to taste more. So doctrine always works onto ethics. Now lets look today, today we are going to go through another doctrinal part, which goes from verses 4 right down to about 13 and after that it goes into exaltation ethics again. So always doctrine, ethics, doctrine ethics. So you need to know why we behave in such way.

1 Peter 2:4-8(ESV) As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."7 So the honour is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. "They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

Here we have packed verses, which is basically 4-5. So, we will look at the relationship between Christ and believers. We will talk about the presence of God, community of God and basically the cornerstone of our lives.

First of all, there is a stone metaphor. Today, we are talking about stones. Why does God used this metaphor of stones? Stones are absolutely useless, lifeless things, nothing exist in a stone and there is nothing further from life then the stone. You will never see life inside a stone. Stones are lifeless objects and yet if you look at Luke chapter 19, the background is that Jesus coming in on Palm Sunday, triumphant. So people are laying up the palms, saying Hosanna, the Lord comes, The Messiah comes and then the pharisees were very upset about people honouring a guy coming on a donkey. They were expecting a real messiah to come in. Jesus says to them,

Luke 19:39-40 (ESV) And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." 40 He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

This is absolutely impossible. The worship and the praise is so appropriate that if the people did not worship God, the very stones, the impossibility will happen. so therefore here you have living stones. This is an impossibility, the fact that you are sitting here and able to worship God and be in a relationship to God is as remote a possibility as stones being able to worship. Because stones are inanimate objects, you will never have a stone having life, you will never have a stone worshipping God unless it is an absolute miracle and so therefore when Peter says we are living stone it is basically an oxymoron. You cannot have living and a stone, they both contradict each other.

So here the word is 'zoe' in Greek which actually applies, it is an eternal life thing of God, which actually applies to us now. The word is used for Jesus Christ, a living hope as it were. So this is an entirely impossible scenario. First we have to realize that we are living miracles. Now this is predicted by Ezekiel

Ezekiel 36:26-28 (ESV) And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will **remove the heart of stone** from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my **Spirit within you** and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. 2

We always go back to the New Covenant. This is the prophesy about New Covenant. It is a very-very important promise that one day the hardness of heart of the Israelites continuous repetitive rebellion against God, their hearts will then be transformed from impenitence to a broken down heart and this is done by the Holy Spirit. So as Jesus was rejected his people will be rejected too.

1 Peter 2:4-5 (ESV) As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,

It is a contradictory response, who man responds to us and how God responds. It is completely different. To God chosen and precious but to man totally rejected and we are Christians we will be treated like Jesus. 11 Christians are killed every single day. We have a new unifying vision of God's people. This vision is that you are living stone but you are being built up as a spiritual house. So the spiritual house is basically a temple as it were. Basically it is a cornerstone of God's presence.

If you trackback to this concept of the presence of God, you go back to the book of Genesis chapter 1 and 2, the presence of God is there with Adam and Eve, they walk in the cool of the evening, they are complete uninterrupted, intimate fellowship and then sin came and the whole story is about the presence of God leaving man. In the old days, Adam and Eve could walk right next to God. They were perfect as God

was perfect and so therefore there was complete fellowship with presence and once sin came in man was cast out of the Garden of Eden from God's presence and all you actually have throughout Genesis is an episodic presence of God. For example, Jacob having a dream then he dreamed of the ladder when they have got angels going up and down from the ladder. Episodic presence of God where God reveals himself to patriarchs and then you have got the Mosaic Covenant where God calls and reconstitutes the people of Israel, gives them his Ten Commandments and then you got the Mosaic Covenant with the tabernacle which then symbolizes the presence of God with His people but yet it is different, it is not like the Garden of Eden anymore. They don't have uninterrupted fellowship, it is marked by distance, it is marked by blood which you have to offer in order to come and approximate God. There is something that blocks man and God.

Then we have got the end time vision of what is going to happen

Isaiah 4:2-6 (ESV) In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel. 3 And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, 4 when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. 5 Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy. 6 There will be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

So it looks as if towards the end of time everybody who is in Zion, everybody in Jerusalem will be holy, it would be again the spirit of God residing over Jerusalem.

Zechariah 14:20-21 (ESV) And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "Holy to the Lord." And the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar. 21 And **every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy** to the Lord of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them.

So there were certain pots which were holy, set aside and they were in the temple but on that day Zechariah says, all the pots will be holy, which means it is a massive outpouring of the Holy Spirit and then when Jesus came you can see

John 1:14 (ESV) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The word dwelt is tabernacle. Then you fast forward to the end, you have revelations when there will be a new heaven and new earth and then Jerusalem will come down from heaven

Revelation 21:15-16 (ESV) And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. 16 The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal

This is very important, he mentions the length, the height and the width equal, which means it is a cube and the cube is symbolic because if you look at the holy of holies it is also a cube. So basically the holy of holies is going to be the entire new Jerusalem where we will be with God uninterrupted and here you have the final vision,

Revelation 21:22-25 (ESV) And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.

Here we have no Sun and the moon, all we have is the light of God day in and day out. That's the glorious vision. You back to Genesis chapter 1 and 2 and Revelations, it is a complete turn back. Where we will enjoy the uninterrupted presence of God. so therefore if you look in the second letter of Peter, it says

2 Peter 1:3-4 (ESV) His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire

In order to prepare us, when the Holy Spirit comes into us, we actually partake of the divine nature, which tells us about the Holy Spirit coming into us. It transforms us and changes our DNA as it were. Here we are living stones being built up as a spiritual house. Now this vision is accomplished to us as a corporate body. It is altogether. Here we have the word, 'spiritual house'. Spiritual house in Greek is actually called 'oikos' and the same Greek word can be used for a physical temple or a household or a dynasty and I think people is purposely being vague, which means we are meant not to be freestanding stones. If we are freestanding stones we are incomplete. The picture which Peter paints for us is we are a corporate body. The purpose of individual stones cannot be realized apart from the community. If you stand alone and the whole focus in the last 20-30 years, you know the born again kind of movement where it says, my lord my savior, I am getting saved, I am going to heaven. It is actually quite wrong. God has in vision a corporate nature, all of us being saved together and our identity cannot be realized apart from the community. We need to belong, even in human physiology the second most important thing after safety is actually belonging to something bigger than yourself.

We are being built up. So this is a process, not only a vision of a corporate body but this corporate body is in the process of being built up. Paul has similar imagery and he says,

Ephesians 2:19-22 (ESV) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

So it is process that we are being undergoing right now. It is like renovation, which looks very bad. So we are actually a corporate body, we are actually a household of God but some of us are missing. So the water, the rain falls and we are always short of people in the church to work as it were. The process of renovation is painful and inconvenient but it is a process of being built together. The stones are being pruned to fit together. The Holy Spirit puts us together. If you actually look at the building of temple I those days, they don't take brick and mortar, the stones are cut exactly the size and they are brought into the work side and they are fitted in like a jigsaw puzzle. The same picture is for all of us, we have to realize our corporate identity, which means all the rough edges cut out and then we are made to fit each other. So this is what the identity is going to be.

Rick Warren's book, The Purpose Driven Life has 25 million copies sold out. The trouble about that book is, it talks about your purpose, you find your purpose not in yourself but in Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. What he should have done is talking about purpose driven life in the context of a body, which is actually much more complete.

There was a legend of an old king in Spartan, a visiting dignitary visited him and he asked him, I heard about your wonderful huge war, can we see it. So the king walked him around and pointed out, that's my war. He didn't have a physical war, the actual war he actually had was every single soldier and every single soldier in his army was the wall and protection of that city. The challenge for our culture is this. We have an inward looking culture, people tell us, we are suppose to discover our inner essence, express that to the world, living out my truth. But again as Christians the values and convictions of this new community, is how we understand our selves and how we take our individual place within this community.

The challenge is the individualistic culture

- Which reject -universal or binding ethic, morals that are absolute, truths that are transcendent
- People want to attend church but they want to be members.
- Help me find and express myself
- Self-exaltation and self-fulfilment.

- Church cannot challenge my life choices

That's why we see a lot of people who move from church to church because the church has to fit me. If it doesn't fit me then I go from one church to another and you will find that a lot of people are doing this because there is no single church that will fit you unless you start your own church. Now you start your own church made after your own image then most probably you will stay. What we are trying to do is basically look at the church basically and try to fit into the church. So here we have a problem of individualism. It is a big-big-big problem that we face.

Why can't we be individuals, why can't we just live our Christian life alone? First of all, we can't even see the truth. We are always blinded by bias. We follow the crowd. Ostrich effect, things that you don't like to hear you put your head into the sand and you only hear the good things but the bad things you don't hear. So a lot of us have the ostrich effect. Outcome biased or selective perception. So we cannot see the truth if we live alone. There are all these ways which makes us biased, so therefore we cannot live alone. In fact, the problem with Western outlook which even pervades Christian culture is that we have become increasingly lonely. We are not supposed to live alone, we are supposed to live with people within the corporate body, the vision being the people, the community of God, that's the vision. That's where you will actually optimally function, instead following Western culture you become lonely. The loneliest people are actually the young people.

In fact, there is a study showing that for young women are far less lonely than young men. 33% of people say they feel lonely often or very-very often. Dr Vivek Murthy writes,

America Is in the Midst of a Loneliness Epidemic (and Work Is Partly to Blame). 47% of Americans are lonely. That's half the population, which is really huge and he writes,

During my years caring for patients, the most common pathology I saw was not heart disease or diabetes, it was loneliness.

Why is that important, because loneliness reduces your lifespan equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Loneliness will kill you like obesity. This is all data which are facts and basically Vivek Murthy writes,

The new work models, the social media that we have created flexibility but often reduce the opportunities for in-person interaction and relationships. And even working at an office doesn't guarantee meaningful connections: People sit in an office full of coworkers, even in open-plan workspaces, but everyone is staring at a computer or attending task-oriented meetings where opportunities to connect on a human level are scarce.

You are there but you are all looking at a computer screen. You sit at a dinner table with your family, almost all of them are looking at the screen and not at each other. So that's why we are increasingly divided. Julianne Holt-Lunstad does a lot of studies on loneliness. She actually looked at 300,000 patients and found out that the greater social connection is associated with 50% lowering of early death. So you want to have a risk reduction of death by 50% come and join a church group. So that's how important loneliness is.

Here is another study on Mexicans attending church and you can find that there was slightly significant that those who attended church, better emotional support, better personal control, better sense of belonging and that translated to better health as well. The other problem is of individualism. There are four things,

1. It paradoxically stunts your personal growth
2. Individualism destroys personal meaning
3. It takes away from the image of God
4. It works against the mission of the church

It actually stuns personal growth, Philippians says,

Philippians 2:3 (ESV) Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

It paradoxically stunts your personal growth

We are actually designed by God to serve others and when you live in a world all by yourself and start seeking yourself, you actually stunt your personal growth. We are supposed to have personal growth in the context of a corporate identity, we are all actually made to live in the corporate identity. You cannot function alone and so therefore if we are separated then we cannot actually grow.

Individualism destroys personal meaning

Now are you living individualistic life, when your life is about my, when everything revolves around you and if that's the case it actually destroys personal meaning in life. We actually find meaning in actually connecting with another person.

It takes away from the image of God

"You do not need to be a part of the church to have a thriving relationship with God; your relationship with Jesus is just that...your relationship with Jesus."

Some people think like that, but that's not true. If you look at Ephesians chapter 3, Paul prays that

Ephesians 3:17-19 (ESV) that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

The only way you can be filled with all the fullness of God and you understand and experience the entire dimension of the love of God which is limitless is with all the saints. You can't experience God alone. So therefore in a church we have different talents, personalities, insights, they are all part of the church. Each person is different and they will bring a different identity and different kind of nuance, a different experience of God which the other person cannot. So therefore the more we cooperate as a corporate body the better it going to be.

Individualism works against the mission of the church

Ephesians 2:14-16 (ESV) 4 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

This means the beautiful part about the church is a church represents a place where all the natural difficulties, strife, conflicts, they are all gone and people of different ages, different likes and dislikes, different characteristics, different color, they are actually one and if you go to the world, you don't see that. You go to interact club, you go to a corporation like IBM, you go to your workplace, it looks good from outside, inside you can see all the politics, they are divided. If you don't come into a church then we will not see this miracle happening. The world come into see a church united, it sees a miracle. It sees two gentiles and Jews, Chinese and Indians, everybody coming together that can only happen in a miracle.

If you as a church is divided then the world cannot see the miracle of Jesus Christ. So we should be a multiracial, intergenerational kind of church because that's the kind of miracle that the world needs to see. If the world sees each as a discrete individual block, the world sees no miracle. So therefore individualism works against the mission of the church. When they see a reconciled humanity to each other then they will see the power of God.

The next thing is that, beside talking about this new spiritual house, Peter talks about we are also a royal priesthood. So here we have got the picture that we are also priest, priest of mediators between God and man. Because they are mediators, the priest evangelism is involved, it is actually a priest duty. We are supposed to take God's grace through the gospel and we bring it to people, so that God will open up their eyes. So therefore if we are called the royal priesthood therefore we must be intermediaries between God and man. So in your workplace you are a priest, you

bring the gospel of God to man and offer that salvation because that's who you are, you are a priest as it were.

We offer sacrifices, Cain and Able made a sacrifice. Cain offered something, not quite so good, Able offered something and Able was accepted. Since then there have been voluntary offering and obligatory offerings, each of these offering is with blood.

Leviticus 17:11 (ESV) For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

Each of these offering where the animal is sacrificed with blood is important because the blood represents life and so therefore when you sin, it is so serious that life has to be taken and each of these sacrifices actually foreshadows the ultimate shadow of Jesus coming in and each of these sacrifice is reflective of inward repentance and faith in God. It cannot be offered on its own

Psalms 51:16-17 (ESV) For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

So we are royal priesthood, we are supposed to bring sacrifices. Sacrifices are physical acts.

Romans 12:1-2 (ESV) I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

So our physical sacrifice is how we live everyday, the work that we do that is your sacrifice, your whole body. It is also praise and thanksgiving

Hebrews 13:16 (ESV) Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Acts of love

Philippians 4:18-19 (ESV) I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. 19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Which means when you actually help someone else, send the gift to someone else, that gift actually is a gift to God. If you are helping somebody else that gift is a gift to God. So basically all these things are spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, which means when you rely on the power of the spirit, according to the will of spirit, as a manifestation of the spirit which is the manifestation of Christ. Which means things done in the power of the Holy Spirit for Christ. So all these things are now the things that we do to glorify God and because we are going to live eternal lives, Paul says,

1 Corinthians 15:58 (ESV) Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Everything that you do, every sacrifice that you do now glorifies God.

Now we have in the Bible pictures that amplify our understanding of Jesus, the Messiah, the Lamb of God, the temple, high priest, Son of God and the Cornerstone.

1 Peter 2:6 (ESV) For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

This is actually taken from Isaiah. So here Isaiah in Isaiah's time that cornerstone is actually his promises to them. A cornerstone is something which you actually line up the rest of the building according to the cornerstone. If your cornerstone is not correct, your building will also be like that. Everything is based on the cornerstone as it were. So therefore at that time Hezekiah was going to fend off Assyrian invaders and they had a choice, they were either to rely on a relationship or alliance with Pharaoh or rely on the cornerstone which is God's promise, so in that case he relied on God's promise and they were spared. So the tradition in Judaism identifies later on that stone with the Messiah,

1 Peter 2:7-8 (ESV) 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," 8 and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

So you actually have a picture of a cornerstone, later on this cornerstone becomes a picture of something which is so important that if you build your life on that you will be honored but it is so important that you actually can overlook it and could stumble over it. So basically it is actually going to bring much blessing or the same thing that brings blessing will bring a curse and how because everybody has to respond to this cornerstone. They stumble because they disobeyed the word as they were destined to do so, because the Bible actually predicts that one day when this cornerstone comes, this Messiah actually comes, the people will either accept it or they will reject

it. When they reject it, they are going to be in trouble. So the question is, what is the cornerstone of your life. The cornerstone is the lines that become the lines of your house. Just imagine your life today. If there is a cornerstone, that cornerstone will then project length, height and breadth, every aspect of your life of your house will have to correspond to that cornerstone. It means every room that you put, every extra brick that you put actually has to be in line with that cornerstone. If it is out of line then it will not work. What Peter is trying to say is that, we need, what is the cornerstone of your life. If your cornerstone is off then you will have anxiety, you will have fear, you got a problem.

What are the cornerstones of our lives?

The cornerstones of our life very simply as Keller tells us, is that non negotiables in your life. There are a lot of things in your life negotiable but there are certain things in your life which are absolutely nonnegotiable and basically it is the cornerstone of your life. What do you build your life upon and the Bible says here very clearly, if you have him as your cornerstone, you will not be disappointed, you will be honored, if you stumble over this cornerstone and if something else is your cornerstone then there will be much trouble.

and whoever **believes in him** will not be put to shame.” 7 So the **honor is for you who believe**, but for those who do not believe,

The challenge for us today is to have Jesus Christ as a cornerstone. In fact Jesus himself in another way,

Luke 6:46-49 (ESV) Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? 47 Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

The foundation of your house, the cornerstone of your house is going to be stressed, the stress will be like a storm. If you build your house upon the rock or you build your house on the cornerstone, then your house will not shake. Now when the storm comes and your house shakes, the important thing is to find where is it shaking and why is it shaking. Because if your house is shaking that means that part of your life isn't based on God. The illness shows you which part of your house is shaking. If your house is well insulated, built on the rock, conformed to the cornerstone, when the storm comes it will not shake. So therefore everybody, everyone of our house is not exactly built on the rock, everyone of our house is not exactly conforming to the cornerstone. When the trial comes it shakes the house and then you find out which

part it is shaking and then you better fix that part and make sure it is aligned to the cornerstone. Because that is what happens to us every single day in life. There will be storms that will come, every single one of us like 1 Peter will experience these storms but the storms are designed to show you where your cornerstone is. That's the message for us today. We are going to be a spiritual house with the presence of God, growing together, we are going to live our lives based on the only one nonnegotiable that's most important and that's God and the challenge is this verse

As you come to him,

He can only be your cornerstone, you can only be growing up as a spiritual house and holy priesthood, all these things can only occur as you come to Him, which means it is an active process. It means daily on your knees, coming to Bible studies, in your groups, coming to Him, as you come to Him and acknowledge, so basically what we do is come to him each time, confess our sin, repent and have more of him as our cornerstone in our life. So that's the key verse.