

I PETER

- I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness
 - A. **I 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, [5] 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. [6] 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." [7] 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," [8] 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.
 - B. Pray
- II. The Making of the Church
 - A. **I Peter 2:4a** . . . **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
 - B. This statement about "Christians coming to Christ as to a living stone" is in reference to coming to Christ, himself, on the one hand, and to the building up of His church on the other. And though this statement seems to start a new idea, if we look at the larger context, we will see these verses about Christ and His church as taking God's call for us to be holy as He is holy, on step further. Let me explain.
 1. For us Christians, holiness of life in all our behavior is both a personal and corporate matter. In other words, holiness is not just a personal matter.
 - a. True, Paul calls us to behave in ways that are worthy of our salvation (**Ephesians 4:1-3**). Jesus says we are to let our light shine in such a way that when others observe the way we live, it will compel them to see God as good and worthy of praise and adoration (**Matthew 5:16**). And again, Paul says we are to prove ourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, because we are as lights in the world (**Philippians 2:15**). And finally, Peter says we are to keep our behavior excellent among

the unbelievers, so that in the thing in which they slander us as evildoers, they may because of our good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation (**I Peter 2:12**).

- b. My point here is that personal holiness is vital to our salvation, our relationship with God, and to our testimony in the world.
 - c. However, the goal of becoming holy in all our behavior is not only for the purpose of transforming us individually so that individually we will bring glory to God, it is also for the purpose of transforming us corporately so that as a community of people who belong to God, we will give the unbelieving world legitimate reasons to see God as good, and worthy of praise, adoration, trust, and submissive obedience.
2. In other words, just as personal holiness is vitally important, so the purity and holiness of the church – both locally and universally – is vitally important. In fact, it is so important that God speaks to this issue of corporate holiness just like He speaks to the issue of personal holiness. Consider these exhortations to community holiness:
- a. **Hebrews 3:12-14** . . . Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. [13] But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. [14] For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.
 - b. **Hebrews 10:23-31** . . . Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; [24] and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, [25] not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. [26] For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins... .
 - c. **I Corinthians 5:9-13** . . . I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; [10] I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. [11] But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. [12] For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not

judge those who are within the church? [13] But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

- d. In addition to these scriptures, God made it clear, both to Israel and now to the church that He will judge His people first, and harsher, than the unbelieving world. Jesus said, in **Luke 12:47-48**, “that the slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, [48] but the one who **did not** know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.”
 - e. And finally, God affirms in **Romans 2:9**, **Hebrews 10:31**, and **I Peter 4:17**, that His judgment on sin and sinners will begin with His people.
3. We see from God’s call to personal holiness and church community holiness that He has laid upon us a high and noble calling for high and noble purposes. Such a calling is not child’s play, but rather a demanding, serious, dying to self, persistent, long-term effort – both individually and as a church.
- a. And those who have taken this calling seriously for more than a few years know that the most dangerous enemy in relation to failure – individually and corporately – is self.
 - b. What I mean by this is that even though there is plenty of temptation and wooing and influencing toward ungodliness coming at us from all sides, the greater challenge, personally, is what comes at us from within.
 - c. And the same is true with the church. The greatest threat to the purity and holiness of each local church and the church universal does not come from without, but from within, that is, from you and from me.
4. However, knowing our weaknesses individually and corporately, God comes to our aid by giving us grace greater than our weakness. For example:
- a. Jesus Christ, on whom the church is built, is not just a character in the Bible or a person in history. He is not just our Savior who comes to us for salvation, and then moves on. He is not just the son of God living in heaven. Jesus Christ is a living stone upon whom the church is being built – which means His life is surging through us individually and through us corporately.

- b. Paul speaks of the empowering and transforming life of Christ within us when he says that God has blessed us through Christ with every spiritual blessing contained in heaven, so that we would be, and indeed can be holy and blameless in how we live in this world today (**Ephesians 1:3-4**).
 - c. Peter speaks to this same empowering and transforming grace when he says that God's divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence . . . so that by His precious and magnificent promises we may become partakers of the divine nature, now that we have escaped the corruption that is in the world brought about by evil and selfish desires (**II Peter 1:3-4**).
 - d. Returning to Paul, we learn that Christ is sanctifying the church, cleansing her by the washing of His word so that He can present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless (**Ephesians 5:25-27**).
 - e. Paul, in writing to Titus says that Jesus gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (**Titus 2:14**).
 - f. Added to these scriptures is the fact that Jesus is the Bread of Life, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the Light of Life, the Life giving Spirit, the Living Water, the Living Word, and the Lamb of God – all for our spiritual benefit now and for eternity.
 - g. The point here is that in coming to Jesus Christ for salvation, we are saved from the penalty **and power of sin**, and we are placed on the path of becoming holy as God is holy – in all our behavior – not just for ourselves, but so we can be joined to the Body of Christ in order to make it a pure and holy church. And we are able to overcome our weaknesses and gain holiness of life, individually and corporately because we have Christ's life (and power, and assistance, and the Holy Spirit, and the living word), surging through us, individually and corporately.
5. So why is purity and holiness so important within the Body of Christ, both in the local church and church universal? Consider these reasons:
- a. The purer or more holy we are as a group, the more we, as a group, will know God as He truly is, and the more we will treasure and love Him as we ought.

- b. The purer we are as a group, the more we will understand God's word and how it is to be applied to our lives in the most practical and complete ways possible.
 - c. The purer we are as a group, the more useful we are to God. In other words, the purer we are corporately, the more God can use us, corporately, to fulfill His will.
 - d. The purer we are as a church, the clearer the distinction between God's people and the unbelievers around us, and even among us.
 - e. And finally, the purer we are as a church, the more we bring honor and glory to God through how we live day in and day out as an identifiable community of Christians.
- C. Returning to verse 4, we read: "And coming to Him as to a living stone." That living stone is the risen Christ, the living Christ – and we have already talked about the impact of His life on us, but I want to say a bit more about Jesus Christ before looking at His being rejected.
1. This living stone is the One who stands at your heart's door and knocks, longing to be invited in for intimate fellowship – fellowship like that which you have with a loved one when enjoying dinner and a quiet evening together (**Revelation 3:20**).
 2. This living stone is the One who not only lives in heaven at God's right hand, He also lives inside of you so that the temporal and the physical are mingled with the eternal and the divine – thus making you a new creation and therefore a new creature (**John 17:23; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27**).
 3. When the devil goes to God and accuses you for having sinned, and calls upon God, the righteous judge, to judge you accordingly, this living stone is the One who represents you as your Advocate, your Mediator, and your Intercessor (**I John 2:1; Romans 8:34; I Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:25**).
 4. This living stone is the One who is the head of the church, leading His followers – both individually and corporately – down that narrow path of life and into doing the will of God (**Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18**).
 5. And this living stone is also God's Precious Cornerstone – the One stone upon which the rest of the church is built and stands secure. Remove the living Christ altogether, or keep Him there in name only, and the church will come crashing down. Now we may never be so un-Christian as to go that far, yet if we allow bits and pieces of distrust to enter in, or allow any of the world's ways to become the

church's ways, or ignore parts of His teachings, or weaken His role as Lord, or allow any unholy thinking, any self-rule, or any fleshly desires to be treated as an acceptable part of the Christ-like life, or lower Christ's place of supremacy and worth, or weaken the message He has given us to present to the world, or let pride enter in, then the foundation of the church will start to crumble, and if not corrected, the church will start to crumble with it.

D. **I Peter 2:4a** . . . 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

1. Though we Christians speak of Jesus Christ as our most precious treasure, and though we worship Him as the One who is worthy of all our adoration and obedience, we once were part of those who reject Him. You see, we reject Jesus Christ when we refuse to submit or choose to no longer submit to His rule over our lives – and we were in that rebellious condition before repenting and being born again.
2. Sadly, as foolish and self-destructive as rejecting Jesus is, many continue to reject Him to their dying day.
 - a. We could say they are blinded by the powerful appeal of self-rule, the allurements of fleshly pleasures, the attraction of riches, the accumulation of possessions, the self-affirmation of pride, the longing for earthly acceptance, the desire for fame, the deception of power, and the wiles of the devil.
 - b. However, if they are adults, their blindness is self-imposed, for it is the result of wanting their own way as opposed to God's way. God makes this clear in **Isaiah 53:6a** . . . All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to [go] his own way.
3. Though we, ourselves, are no longer rejecting Christ, we know about rejecting Him, and this ought to motivate us to speak clearly about the fact of rebellion and the folly of rebellion to those around us.

E. **I Peter 2:4b** . . . 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**

1. You may be thinking that this statement about Jesus being choice and precious in the sight of God is a bit too obvious. After all, how could Jesus be anything less than this in God's sight?
2. However, this statement is still worth pondering because the relationship of the Father with the Son is not one dimensional, but two. What is my point? Jesus is choice and precious in the sight of God, partly because of who he is – which is God's son, and partly

because of what he has done – which is to deny Himself and willingly submit to and cheerfully serve God.

3. Let me give you a three examples:
 - a. Twice God said of Jesus: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (**Matthew 3:16-17; 17:5**).
 - b. The first time was at Jesus’ baptism, which followed His forty days in the wilderness where He was powerfully tried and tempted – yet without sin.
 - c. The second time was on the Mount of Transfiguration, which followed Jesus’ words to His disciples about purposefully heading to Jerusalem where He knew He would be put to death. In other words, Jesus was God’s beloved Son because of who He was, and also because of what He had done, was doing, and would do.
 - d. My third example comes from **Hebrews 1:9**, where God said that Jesus loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. In other words, Jesus not only did the right things, His heart felt and mind thought the right things.

III. Conclusion

- A. This raises two questions for each one of us to consider.
 1. First, is Jesus choice and precious to you? By this I do not mean, is your salvation precious to you, or is what Christ does for you in addition to your salvation precious to you, or is who you are in Christ precious to you, or are any other of the wonderful and gracious works of Christ precious to you. When I ask if Christ is precious to you, I am asking if Christ, himself, is precious to you?
 2. Second, are you precious to God in this same way Christ is? Or maybe I should ask, do you want to be precious to God in the same, two dimensional way Christ is” Of course, if you are born again, you are precious because you are God’s child. But as one who is born again, are you making yourself precious to God by the way you purposefully deny self, willingly submit to His Lordship, and cheerfully serve Him?
- B. May we bring glory to God in who we are and how we live!