

1 Peter 2 (Part 2) :1-12 • Behold, I am Laying in Zion a Stone

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

We are in 1 Peter in our 3rd pass through the Bible in 31 years. So, 1 Peter 2; open your Bible there. Wednesday nights we're studying through the Old Testament, and we're going to be finishing the book Hosea this coming Wednesday, Lord willing.

So, 1 Peter we covered, as you guys remember, the last time we were in 1 Peter we just read the 1st verse. And then I talked for that message about how we are able, or enabled, by the Holy Spirit to walk in obedience through His work of grace in our lives. But we're going to go ahead and read the 1st verse again, and then down through verse 12. So, follow along with me as I read. It says:

"¹ So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

² Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁴ 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 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.

⁹ *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* ¹⁰ *Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

¹¹ *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.* ¹² *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."* (ESV)

Stop there please, and let's pray.

Lord, this is where we come humbly before you. We've taken time to read these verses this morning, and now Lord we want to understand what's being said here. And so, we want to rely completely on your Holy Spirit.

We pray that you would fill us with insight and understanding. We pray that you'd give us eyes to see and ears to hear, and a heart truly to receive. Lord, we believe that these are part and parcel of what it means to be a child of God. And yet there are times, Lord, that we can willfully stop up our ears, and close our eyes, but we don't want to do that today.

We pray, Lord, that you would speak to us, that you would minister to each heart. We pray that you would guide and direct each person. We come to you Lord, for instruction and insight and understanding, and we pray for that today. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

I want you to take note of the fact that as we begin verse one, it starts with the simple word – “so.”

So - usually that's a connecting word, and we use it when we've just said something and now, we're going to say something else that's tied to what we just said. We say it and then we say “so, this is the deal.”

Now this is also translated, “therefore.” You guys have heard me say many times whenever you see the word “therefore,” you have to go back and see what has been said because the author is about to say something that is predicated on what has just been said.

"Therefore," or "*so, put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.*" Last time we were in 1 Peter, we talked about that. We talked about what those things mean and how we can put them away. But Peter then goes on saying in verse 2 "*like, newborn infants long for the pure spiritual milk.*"

Now when you read this, you've got to be careful. Peter is not saying that they are newborn infants. He's not saying, "you guys are really young in the Lord, and so as babies I want you to..." That would be an easy misunderstanding because elsewhere in the New Testament, the milk of the word is seen or talked about alongside the meat of the word. And the milk elsewhere is referred to as the basic ideas of Christianity, and the meat of the word is considered to be essentially those things which are deeper truths, if you will. Okay, so milk and meat. That's not the way Peter is referring to it here, so don't get confused.

Peter is talking about milk only from the standpoint of how you should desire it. You'll notice that he says, "*long for the pure spiritual milk.*" That word is also translated, "crave," elsewhere. It means to deeply desire. That's the point of what he's saying. He's not saying they're babies. He's saying this: as believers, I want you to deeply desire the Word of God.

It's not uncommon when somebody comes to Christ in those early stages. They get really excited about God's word and they're just ravenously hungry, and they're reading their Bible all the time, and they just love going through the Word of God. And it's just a lot of fun. But it's also not uncommon for things to kind of slow down. And life kind of gets busy and suddenly we're not really reading our Bible as much as we did before. We kind of back off a little bit, and then we actually get to the point where we're only really hearing the word on Sundays, and that's only if we come to church.

And about that time somebody winds up talking to me and just saying, "Pastor Paul, the Word of God just isn't hitting me like it used to. I'm just not getting out of it like I used to get out of it." And sometimes the reason is because you're just not spending the same amount of time.

Let me show you kind of a loose paraphrase of what these verses are saying. This is mine, okay? So don't quote it to anybody, but it says:

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Pastor Paul's Translation

“Knowing what you do about the gospel and our calling to be different in this world - (and that's what he's saying, that's the meaning of ‘so’ because what he said in the past was ‘here's the gospel, here's how to live the gospel, here's how to walk it out’). Knowing what you do about the gospel (which he explained in chapter 1) and knowing that you've been called to live differently because of that gospel, have a deep longing for the Word of God so that you may grow and mature in your faith and knowledge of the truth.”

So, we come back to this idea, this deep longing. Sue and I like to call it “an appetite for the word.” We use that a lot when we're talking about ourselves and frankly about other people sometimes. We talk about someone's appetite for the word. How's your appetite? You know what's interesting about that sort of an idea? The more you consume the Word of God, the greater your appetite is going to be for the Word of God.

It almost sounds backwards because you would think the more you eat, the more you get full. “Oh, I can't - I couldn't eat another bite.” Well, that's not what's going on here. Spiritually speaking, the more you get fed, the more you desire, the more you want. And it's kind of interesting, isn't it?

I guess it's similar to drinking water; water's kind of like that. The more water you drink, the more you want to drink. We need to think about this a little bit this morning. What's your appetite like as it relates to the Word of God? I think there's a lot of reasons why people get messed up on this and why they begin to wane in their appetite for the word.

One of the reasons that I think people do that is because they begin to make assumptions about how they ought to be studying the Word of God. When you're a brand-new Christian, you don't really know that many Christians probably, and you're just kind of doing your own thing.

Well, eventually you get to know people at church and you find out how they do things. And then you kind of start thinking “well, maybe that's the way things are supposed to be done.” And so you learn how this person studies the Word of God. Or maybe you even take a class and they go through this particular method of studying the Word of God, and you're kind of like “well, okay, that's obviously an approved method,” and you try it and it doesn't work for you.

I know that I've actually told you this before, but Sue and I study the word very differently. We go through the Word very differently. She is able to take large chunks. She'll take several chapters in a single sitting and just read through

those chapters and gets a lot out of it. I can't do that. I'm so, I don't know what it is about my brain, I'm so distractible. I read two verses and I've got to close my Bible and think about it for the rest of the day. I have to sit and meditate on the Word of God. I've learned over the years that's how I consume better. Otherwise, it's just kind of like pouring it in and it goes right out again.

So, it's kind of interesting, isn't it? I think sometimes we learn about how other people study the Bible or read their Bible, and we think, "well, I should be doing that," and then we try to do it and it doesn't really click for us. And then we end up thinking we're spiritually dumb or something. And we get discouraged and sometimes people will just kind of give up and say, "well, I don't know. I guess it's just not something that works for me." And the problem is that we're comparing ourselves with other people and we're making assumptions about the way things ought to be or ought to go.

I have come to believe that how we consume the Word of God is a very personal thing. And just because somebody else does it a different way doesn't mean that you have to do it that way or that's a good way for you. And fortunately, we live in a time when you have a lot of options. I've talked to people who struggled reading their Bible, and then came to find out that they were auditory learners. And they ended up just playing the Bible listening to the Word of God on their way to work or whatever, and they found out "oh man, this is great! This is the way I learn; this is the way I absorb!" - that's wonderful! But the thing is you can't go around feeling like you're a second-class citizen because you don't do it like the next person does it, you know what I mean?

Do you guys remember when the Bible started being available on cassette tape? You guys remember cassette tapes? Yeah, those were fun. You used to put a pencil in there and wind the tape back up when your machine ate it. Anyway, and then the Bible came out on CD, compact disc!

And we all thought that was really cool but at first, they were really spendy. I remember when the first Bible on cassette came out, I think we had them even in our bookstore. They were like a couple hundred bucks. And it was hard to afford something like that when they first came out. I don't know if it was all about copyright issues or what, but think of the day we're living in now. I can bring up the Bible app on my phone and listen to the Bible in my choice of translations as long as I want. And it's just there. I have it, it's there. Multiple translations anytime I want. How cool is that?

Some people have also come up to me and kind of bemoaned their inability to study through the Word or to gain from the Word, and they'll say things like, "Pastor, I really get a lot out of teaching; when someone teaches like yourself or another Bible teacher. But when I go home and read my Bible, I just don't get that out of it. I don't get that same kind of essence out of the word." And they're like, "what's wrong with me?"

Well, first of all, you're kind of devaluing what God put in the church, and that is teachers. Why do you think God gave the body of Christ teachers? It's because that's the way some people are going to learn the best, and that's okay. I love listening to Bible teachers. I mean, as a Bible teacher, I love listening to a good study in the Word of God. And frankly, I learn a lot when I do it that way. But again, we have these assumptions that tell me if I'm not sitting down with my Bible and reading chapter after chapter and doing it just this way, I'm not really doing it right.

Listen, the point - the most important point - is consuming the Word of God. I don't care how you consume it, I really don't. I don't care if you get it by listening or by hearing somebody teach it or reading your Bible or whatever; however you consume the Word of God, consume the Word of God and increase your appetite for it so that you continue to desire that pure spiritual milk because as Peter says here, that's how we grow up in our salvation.

Now Peter goes on in verse 4 to say, "*as you come to him, a living stone,*" and this is where Peter is going to begin to speak about Jesus, and he's going to use this idea of a stone or a rock, and it's a very common thing in the Word of God.

He says, "*as you come to him, a living stone.*" And then he says, "*rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house.*" So now we're even talking about ourselves as living stones or as stones, but we are being used to be built up into a spiritual house or if you will, a temple.

It's interesting, when I was a little kid, I remember being in church and sometimes people would talk about the house of the Lord. And we would even be told in certain places of the church, you had to be quiet. When I was a kid, they'd always tell you "Don't run," but they didn't tell me "Don't run" because you might run into somebody and knock them over. They said "don't run" because you're in church.

And there's certain things that you learn that you could do in church. And we were kind of made to feel like this place is someplace special. And then I got

saved and I started reading the Bible and I found out that the someplace special is you; you're the someplace special.

God doesn't dwell in a building. He doesn't dwell in a single location like was in the old covenant. God dwelt in the temple in Jerusalem, and He said, there I will manifest my presence to the people of Israel (see the book of Exodus). That's not the case today.

Today you are a temple of the Holy Spirit individually, and together we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are that spiritual building that is being built up to be the place where God dwells. God does not dwell in a building like this. He dwells in you, in people like you. And when we come together, we form this beautiful collective temple of God's presence where he desires to move and to operate and so forth.

The idea of being built up as stones, as he says, is an interesting one, isn't it? And yet, we are patterned after the living stone, which we find out is the cornerstone, and that is where he begins to talk about Jesus using two different Old Testament passages; one in Isaiah and then the other one in the Psalms, Psalm 1:18.

Look at verse 6. This is where he quotes Isaiah *"for it stands in scripture. Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion, a cornerstone. Chosen and precious and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."*

So, God says *"I'm laying a stone,"* and that doesn't mean a whole lot to us today because we don't build our structures today like they did back then out of stone. It was a huge process to put together a temple or a big building that was made of stone because they had to go out to the quarry, and they had to cut the stones out of the rock. And they would actually do all the fashioning of the stone there at the quarry, and then they'd have to load it up onto a cart and move it to the building site. And that's where they would put the stones in place to build the building.

But there was a first stone that was vitally important, and that was the cornerstone. And it was the stone that connected the initial first two walls, and the cornerstone was as important to the building process back then as a foundation is to the building process today. And we all know that if you're going to build a building and build it right, you have to get the foundation correct because if the foundation is messed up, the building is going to be messed up.

Isn't the same true for our faith? Our understanding of God. If your foundational understanding of God is wrong - it's not plumb, it's not straight and level - then you begin to build on that in your understanding, and it's always going to be a little bit wonky in a couple areas. You've got places where the doors don't close quite right, or the windows won't open because things are a little off.

Well, foundations are vitally important in our sort of an understanding of building, but in their building process it was the cornerstone. And the cornerstone was put in such a way that all of the other stones were in line with the cornerstone, and Jesus is the chief cornerstone.

And what that means is everything about our walk with Him, everything about our understanding of Christianity, is based on Him. He's the plumb line, if you will. He's the one we look to. It all starts with Him and that it is built upon him. The structure is built upon Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone of the whole building.

He goes on and he says, regarding "*the stone that the builders rejected has become*," this is the end of verse 7, "*the stone [that] the builders rejected has become the cornerstone*" verse 8 "*and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense*."

Now here we come to an understanding of Jesus as the stone, the chief cornerstone, but in negative terms. Now we suddenly turn negative. We've looked at all these positive elements of the chief cornerstone, the one we pattern our lives after, the one we are built upon.

And yet he quotes this section where it becomes a negative sort of a thing. And he says that people stumble, they stumble over this stone. In fact, he says "*they stumble because they disobey the word as they were destined to do*." And as we read through these verses, we think wow, there's a lot of stuff here to unpack. There's a lot of things here to understand.

I'm going to start by showing you the quotation right from Isaiah, right where Peter got it. And up on the screen it says:

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Isaiah 28:16 (ESV)

therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation:

So, the Lord says, this is my doing. I have put this cornerstone in this place for you to understand that this is the pattern, the way this whole spiritual house is going to be built. And then Peter says, as we look back in verse 5 in our text, *“you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house”* connected to this cornerstone.

What a beautiful picture. I don't know if you've ever been to a quarry. I've seen what goes on there, but there's a lot of digging and scraping and cutting, and that's what it takes to make a stone that is fit to put into the building. There's a lot of hammering, maybe even a little dynamite going on.

It can be kind of a noisy, dirty place. And that, Christians, is going on in your life. Have you felt it? Have you felt the chisel of God's grace in your life? Have you felt the hammer? Have you felt that shaping that God is doing in your life? It can come in all kinds of different forms. All kinds of different ways.

The circumstances we go through. The difficult situations we endure every single day. We feel the Lord's hammer and chisel. You are being shaped into the image of the chief cornerstone; made in His image, shaped in His image. And sometimes it's a pretty painful process, and yet the Lord is doing a good work.

He says, *“you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house”* to be something. Did you see what he says there in verse 5? He says you're being built up to be a *“holy priesthood.”* Well, what do priests do? He says they *“offer spiritual sacrifices (that are) acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*

So, while God is doing the work of building you up as a living stone, you've got a work that you're doing as well; and it's the work of the priesthood. And that work is to offer spiritual sacrifices. Obviously, the imagery here is something that most of Peter's audience would've been really familiar with because most of these people were Jewish. Not all of them, but most of them.

And because they were Jewish, they understood the Jewish priesthood, they knew what the Jewish priest did and this was all very common sort of imagery. But this isn't something that we deal with on a regular sort of a basis. I have never actually, physically with my own eyes, watched a high priest offer a sacrifice. But that's what they did. So, he says you are to offer spiritual sacrifices. That's a key. Very important. We offer spiritual sacrifices, not physical ones. He doesn't want you to go out and get a goat or a lamb or a bull and sacrifice it in your backyard. That would be weird and probably against the law.

We are offering spiritual sacrifices. So, you kind of look at that and you go “Okay, spiritual sacrifices. Yes. Let's get right to that. Let's get that - write that down, spiritual sacrifices start today.” What are you going to be sacrificing? I mean, if they're spiritual, what is a spiritual sacrifice? What kind of sacrifices, practically speaking, are we even supposed to be doing? Paul explains it - Romans 12:

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Romans 12:1 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies (in other words, yourself) as a living sacrifice, (and then he tells us that kind of a sacrifice is) holy and acceptable to God. (In fact, he goes on to say, it is your spiritual worship)

There it is. We are priests. We offer sacrifices and the sacrifice is you. But I don't offer you; you offer you. You don't offer me; I offer me to the Lord. See, what we're talking about is offering ourselves, bringing ourselves to the Lord and saying “I am yours. I belong to you, and I pray that you would use me today for whatever purpose you have for me today. I offer myself up as a sacrifice to live for you.” And what that means is I relinquish my rights to live for myself and to please myself, and I offer myself to you, so as to please you and to live for you.

We're talking about surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That is a spiritual sacrifice, and it is the one that we are to give. It is the one we are to present, and we're told by Paul that it's acceptable. In fact, God considers it a very precious thing when you simply bring yourself to him and say “I'm yours. I belong to you Lord. I offer myself to you.”

And by the way, this is a daily sacrifice. I wish it was a once for all, I really do. I wish I could just kind of go “Lord,” you know when you come to Jesus on that day you come to the Lord, “Lord, I accept you as my savior. I offer myself up to you today and for all time.” Wouldn't that be wonderful?

The problem is I keep taking things back. And so, this is a daily sacrifice that we offer to the Lord. Today, Sunday, April what, 23rd? Is that what it is today? Fourth? Is it the 24th? Okay that was yesterday, but today I offer myself to you anew. I bring myself to you to do. That's the spiritual sacrifice.

And then again in verses 7 and 8, he tells us more about this precious cornerstone by saying that in verse 7 for you, this is an honorable thing; this is a

wonderful thing. So the honor, he says, is for you who believe. But then he is going to talk about those who do not believe; those who have rejected Christ and who He is and what He is.

And he says He also becomes the cornerstone for them, but in a different, completely different sort of a way. He says, but for those who do not believe the stone that the builders rejected is shown to be the cornerstone, they casted aside and said “It's no good. We're not going to pattern our lives after this cornerstone.”

But they see now that He is the cornerstone of all that God is doing. And once again, he's quoting Psalm 1:18 here and applying it to Jesus. You might say, “well, what gives Peter the right to quote Psalm 1:18 and apply it to Jesus? I mean, good grief, it was written a long time before Jesus was born.”

Well, first of all, Psalm 1:18, even among the Jews, was recognized as a messianic Psalm. The word messianic means applying to the Messiah, but there's something else. There's another reason why Peter had the right to apply Psalm 1:18 to Jesus. And that's because Jesus applied Psalm 1:18 to Himself.

And you might remember the circumstances that was happening at the time. This was after He wrote into the city on a donkey in what we call Palm Sunday, but the triumphal entry, right? And the religious leaders had rejected Jesus completely by this time. So, Jesus began to tell them a parable about these wicked servants who were working in the field that belonged to a particular landowner.

They worked the field to get the fruit from it and so forth. And eventually at harvest time, according to this parable Jesus is telling, they are sent representatives from the landowner to receive his share of the crop. Well, they mistreated some of them, they killed others. So, the master or the landowner sent more people and it happened the same to them.

And finally, he said “I'm going to send my son. Surely, they will respect my son and receive him properly.” But it says that when they saw the son coming, they said “Hey, look, here's the heir. Let's kill him and we'll take over the land ourselves.” And so, it was a very brutal sort of a thing. So, Jesus asked the religious leaders, He said, “What will the landowner do? What do you think the landowner will do?”

They said “Oh, it's easy. He'll put those wretched men to a wretched end and he'll turn that land over to somebody who will work it properly and give him his

fruit in its season.” Well, they no sooner had said that when they realized Jesus told the parable about them.

They were the wicked servants, and that's when Jesus went on to say this; it's recorded in Matthew 21. He says:

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Matthew 21:42-44 (ESV)

"Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" (And then Jesus gives this commentary, which is vital to understand) Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

Now there's two interesting and very important things that Jesus says in that commentary. First, he says the land is going to be taken away and given to another, and he's talking about the kingdom. This is one of the interesting prophecies where Jesus is telling us that the Gentiles are going to come into play now in God's redemptive plan, and they are going to receive from God the kingdom and produce its fruit.

But the second thing that we - and Peter will talk about that in a moment again in his text - but the other thing that we get from this is what happens when we encounter the rock. And there are two different encounters that are kind of given to us in this passage. You'll notice that the first one is that the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces.

Now that sounds like a negative thing. But actually, one of these encounters with the rock is bad, and the other one is very good and this one is good. He says, the one who falls on this stone will be broken in pieces. And frankly, people, that's a wonderful description of every person who comes to faith in Jesus Christ; we're broken in pieces. And that kind of brokenness is a good brokenness.

You see, we don't usually value brokenness in our culture. In fact, we usually devalue it. If something's broken, we throw it away or we put it on a yard sale or we give it away, put a free sign on it and put it out by the road; just let somebody come and grab it. And we do that because when it's broken, "ah, it's broken, or it only kind of works."

Can I tell you that in God's economy, broken things are precious to Him. They're very precious because a broken person - and I'm not talking about somebody who's broken emotionally or had their will broken in a detrimental, damaging sort of a way - I'm talking about the brokenness that comes from recognizing that I'm a sinner and there's nothing I can do about it.

And Jesus is the Savior, and He's the one who came to save me and I need Him. That brokenness is what Jesus described elsewhere as the narrow way. Remember when He said the way the life is narrow and it's hard? You know why? You've got to be broken to go down that way, you can't be full of yourself. But brokenness is a good thing.

Remember when David was confronted with his sin of adultery with Bathsheba? He said to the Lord, I would bring you an offering, but that's not what you want. What you desire is a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17), a broken spirit. That's what you're looking for. You want brokenness, and that's what it takes to come to Jesus. And so, this first response to having an encounter with this stone, this rock that is Jesus is a good one.

But the bad encounter, the bad response, is taken up in these words "*when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.*" If you read the New King James version, your Bible says, "*they will be crushed to powder.*" And this is the person who stubbornly refuses to acknowledge their sin. They stubbornly refuse to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Savior. And frankly, it's just what we see happen; we see the stone in a lot of different ways in the Old Testament, don't we?

You remember the stone? It wasn't that long ago we went through Daniel. You guys remember Nebuchadnezzar's dream? He has this dream of this statue that progressively represents the kingdoms of mankind, the world dominating powers of mankind. But then in that dream, when he's beholding this incredible statue, he sees a rock, a stone, a big rock that comes rolling down a hill and it smashes into that statue.

And what happens to the statue? It's busted up; it's crushed. And then what happens to the stone? The rock grows into a mountain that endures forever. That's another picture of Jesus. But it's a picture of this encounter that Jesus is talking about. The one on whom this stone falls is crushed to powder because they have rejected, because they have stubbornly refused.

Now, I want you to notice here at the end of verse 8, He says "*they stumbled because they disobeyed the word as they were destined to do.*" How are we to

think about those words “as they were destined to do”? The New King James says, “*to which they were appointed.*” Well, it doesn't mean they were appointed to damnation. I don't believe that at all. I don't believe anybody is appointed unto damnation.

What it means is they were destined to stumble because their lives were marked by rebellion and unbelief. Listen, you live your life in rebellion and unbelief, and you are destined to stumble. If you harden your heart against God, you're destined to stumble. If you choose to reject the one true God and the Savior of the world, you're destined to stumble. You will stumble. It's the way it is.

So, Peter goes on to say, “*you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*” (1 Peter 2:9). Isn't that beautiful? Not only are we being called into this priesthood where we offer sacrifices of our own self, but we are also called by God to declare and proclaim the excellencies of this one who has rescued us and brought us from darkness into His glorious light.

He says, “*Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*” Based on that, in verse 11 and 12 here, he ends by giving a final series of exhortations. We'll do these fairly quickly. He says in verse 11, brothers “*I urge you,*” and that in the Greek is emphatic. It means, in fact, it's even translated elsewhere as “I beg you.” I beg you “*as sojourners and exiles*” verse 11, “*to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which war against your soul.*”

Couple of things we bring out just out of verse 11. And the first one is, did you notice Peter calls us “sojourners and exiles”? That means we're not home. We are a sojourner. A sojourner is a traveler, somebody who never puts down roots; they just keep traveling. They sojourn through life. And we're exiles. Exiles means we've been kind of kicked out of a - we don't have a home; we're not home right now.

And that's the attitude that was - have you ever gone somewhere that you felt like you just didn't belong? Have you ever felt that feeling? It's a weird feeling when you gather with other people, and they're all of a particular ilk or whatever, and you just don't fit and you know it. As soon as you walk in there, “I don't belong here.” Maybe you've even traveled to a foreign country and you've been around people; they're all speaking a different language, they're eating different food. And you're just like, “I don't belong. I don't fit here.”

And it's a weird sensation; I've felt it a few times in my life. That's the sensation we're to have living in this world. We don't belong here. We don't belong. And yet we don't often think that. Instead of thinking that, we think we ought to belong, and things ought to be more like home.

And when I turn on the news and I hear that things aren't going the way I would like them to go or the way that God would have them to go, I get angry. I'm like, "Why is this happening this way? We've got these politicians and they're corrupt, and we've got these wars breaking out, and they're invading countries and killing people. Why is this happening?"

Well, okay, it's happening because this world is under the temporary dominion of Satan. Okay? He's the prince of this world. Those are the words Jesus used to describe him. It's temporary. But for right now, he's doing his thing and you don't belong here. So don't get mad. Just be the salt and light that you are called to be.

We're not going to do any good getting mad about things. And I say that from personal experience. I've gotten angry from just watching the news; that's why I don't watch the news anymore. I don't like getting angry, but I needed that reminder to know that Paul, you're responding like this because you're thinking of this world in terms that are really unbiblical.

You're thinking of this as kind of like your forever home. Like you ought to belong here. Like your ways, your thoughts, God's ways should be acceptable and embraced by this world, and you get angry when they're not. Why is that? I mean, other than you being an idiot, that's what God says to me. He uses that word a lot with me, and I don't mind.

It's because I've gotten off the path. I've forgotten that I'm a sojourner and an exile, and this world is not my home. Frankly, I love it when a believer passes from this life and instead of saying they've died, we say they went home. That's exactly what's happened. "Where's so and so?" "Oh, he went home. He's with Jesus. He went home to be with Jesus." That's a good phrase because he wasn't home here; he was an exile here. He was a traveler just passing through, and that's an important reminder for us to get here.

But the second thing that we really see here after calling us Sojourners and Exiles, he tells us to abstain from the passions of the flesh. You might circle the word abstain in your Bible. That's a good word to think on and meditate on what does it mean to abstain; to hold back from and so forth. But notice he says, abstain from what? The passions of your flesh. And then he tells you why.

Because they war against your soul. It literally wages a war against your soul. Remember, your soul is your emotions and your intellect and your will. So, the passions of the flesh are waging war. There's this battle going on inside of all of us, but that battle increases the more I submit to my sinful passions. And so, he says abstain from your sinful passions because they just war against your soul.

You know what I get out of this? Peter is telling me there's a threat to my Christian walk. Guess what it is? It's me.

I mean, it's really easy to blame other people; "if you were just a better Christian, I'd be a better Christian." Isn't that dumb? Or it's easy to blame Satan. "Boy, Satan's really been attacking me this week." Hey, you want to know the truth? I gave him a huge target - my sinful passions. Peter says abstain from them.

In other words, what he's saying is the biggest hindrance to your walk with Jesus is you. It's you. Don't look at other people, don't look at your spouse, don't look at your kids. Don't look at your boss. Look at you. You are your biggest problem.

And then finally this last verse, verse 12, he says, "*keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you,*" and notice he says "when" they speak against you, not "if" they're going to speak against you. When they do, they can "*see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*" And that basically just reminds us the world - this world that we don't belong to, this world that we're not at home in - they're not going to like you because they know you don't belong too. You don't buy into all that junk that they buy into, and they don't like it when you say things that aren't consistent with what they believe.

In fact, when you challenge their beliefs, they get angry. And they criticize you and they think you're stupid and that's going to happen. So, what are you going to do? How are you going to respond?

He says, live in a way that honors the Lord. What's that mean? We honor the Lord when we don't act like they act; when I don't take abuse and heap it back on them. "Oh yeah?" sort of a thing. That's my best comeback by the way. You can use that one if you want. It's great. Somebody says something you go, "oh yeah?" they have no answer for it. Anyway, how are we to respond? Paul sums it up. We'll end with this. This is from Romans 12. He says:

(Slide)

Romans 12:19-21

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God (He'll take care of it. Just commit it to Him) for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (In fact, Paul says you know what, do the opposite) To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, (do good to him) feed him; If he (your enemy) is thirsty, give him something to drink; Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

In other words, we already made the point. This world is evil; don't be overcome by it. You overcome that evil with good, and it's the goodness of the Lord that is shining through us. His goodness. Let that come out when there's all this garbage coming your way and criticism and evil talk. Don't fire it back at them, that's not going to do any good. Love them. Do good things for them. Overcome evil with good. Amen.

Let's stand together. We will have people down front to pray with you as people are heading out. So, if you need prayer this morning, we invite you to come up and receive that. Let's pray together.

Father, we just commit all this into your hands because Lord, you've given us so much information here in these verses. There's so much to apply to our lives and we want very much to walk it out, but we find ourselves getting in the way so often.

We pray that You'd help us to live our lives as a reflection and in keeping with in line with the chief cornerstone. Help us Lord, to pattern our lives after Him. He is the foundation of all that we believe and all that we are. And as we live our lives, as we walk out our lives for Jesus, help us we pray to live in a way that honors You and honors Your word.

So, Father God, our expectations are upon you to accomplish this work in and through us, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.