

Living Stones or Stumbling Stones

1 Peter 2:4-12

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It is much easier to destroy something than to build it up. Jesus told his disciples that he will build his church. This started in the first century at the preaching of the apostles. This is how Jesus began to build his church. The apostles preached the good news of God's kingdom and those who believed became followers of Jesus and continued to announce the life-changing message of the gospel. The group or gathering of believers is what is called "*ekklesia* (church). Peter's 2nd sermon to a Jewish council was "*Jesus is the stone, you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.*" (*Acts 4:11*); when it comes to building his church, Jesus used his apostles whose main message was salvation is found only in Jesus. The cornerstone upon which people are to build their lives.

Paul also taught about Jesus being the cornerstone. **Eph.2:19-20** Writing to the church at Ephesus Paul said. "*You are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.*"

Jesus used his people (his followers, disciples) to build his church. **Why did Jesus establish the church?** *To bring more people into God's kingdom. To seek and save the lost; to reconcile the world back to God; to make more disciples in the world.*

Once we come to Christ, we are given a new identity. We no longer belong to ourselves; we are Christ's. Throughout Scripture we are often reminded of who we are in Jesus because we tend to forget who we are in this world. **Very often we suffer from identity crisis.**

Here is another metaphor or imagery to help us understand our identity. Jesus is known as the Living stone and his followers are called "living stones". **1 Pet.2:4-12**

Jesus was selected by God to be the living stone, but people have rejected Jesus as a foundation stone for their lives.

Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chose and precious and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. Isa.28:16

To those who believe the stone is precious, but to those who don't believe the stone becomes a stumbling stone, a rock of offense (a rock that will offend you).

Jesus is both a cornerstone (foundation) and he is also a stumbling stone. (a rock that will make people trip over)

He is a cornerstone to those who believe; but to those who don't believe Jesus becomes a stone by which they will fall. ***He is either or, depending on what people choose to do with him.***

His followers are known as living stones (v.4) We are living stones used in building up God's spiritual house; to be a holy priesthood that offers acceptable sacrifices to God.

Eph.2:21-22 In Christ we are being joined together to make a holy temple, a dwelling place in which God lives by his Spirit.

As living stones, you are being used by God to build a spiritual house, in which you are his holy priests to minister to him. Priests were the servants of God, and they represented God before the people. They were the ones in charge of the sacrifices and worship in the Old Testament. Now God's people are all called priests to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to him.

v.9 Your new identity:

-You are a chosen people (race) a royal priesthood, holy nation, a people belonging to God (people for his own possession).

God chose you so that you proclaim or declare his excellencies (virtues, moral goodness). It is our job to declare to people how wonderful God is.

We are to be strangers (aliens) in this world (v.11) We are just passing through; eventually this won't be our home. God's people are to behave as exiles in this world. We are to abstain from the things the world says ok to. Abstain from the passion of the flesh which wage war against our soul.

Live honorable lives among pagans (check out your conduct) so that when they accuse you of doing wrong; they may see your good deeds and give glory to God.

Let your actions reflect your new identity in this world.

The Bible calls God's people to let the light shine by their works, by their action.

We are called living stones, used to build God's house, God's kingdom; however, some Christians may act like stumbling blocks to God's kingdom and instead of helping build his kingdom they slow down its progress. **Christians when we are not helping God's cause, then we oppose it.** When we are not helping to advance the proclamation of the gospel, then we are helping to stop it. Last week I talked about how Paul told church folks to not destroy the work of God for the sake of food, or drink or the observance of certain days. **(Rom.14) That is an example of people being stumbling stones rather than living stone.**

When church folks fight over matters of opinion and preferences, they are acting as stumbling stones rather than living stone.

When people in the church try to create division, they are becoming obstacles in the kingdom of God rather than living stones.

Our actions, how we behave in this world says to others if we are truly living to our new identity or not.

Living stones build God's kingdom; they declare his goodness in this world. They live as aliens in this world knowing that this is not their final place. Their conduct is evident for they are the reason people give glory to God. God is building his kingdom and you are a valuable part in it. **Are you helping God's cause or are you being a hindrance, a stumbling stone?**