

# LIVING STONES IN A DYING WORLD: CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND THE CALL TO PUBLIC OBEDIENCE

From 1 Peter 2:4-14  
10/20/19

## INTRODUCTION

1. Opening Illustration [LEGO PIC]: Legos!
2. Transition: Legos may be the bane of existence for parents, but they are a delight to kids around the world. The very Lego piece that causes stumbling and offense to a parent, is, of course chosen and precious in the sight of the child.

The degree of difference in appraisal between a parent's and a child's valuation of a lone lego piece is nearly identical to the difference of appraisal between the world's and God's valuation of Jesus Christ.

Where a lone Lego piece is a nuisance to a parent, to a child, it is the only piece absolutely essential for the construction of his current lego project.

Well, God is at work too.

3. **Proposition: Because God is at work building up His Church, get to work embracing His plans, proclaiming His excellencies, and walking in His ways.**

- (1) We are being built up by God
- (2) To be a people who shine for God

## INTRO/RECAP

Last week we learned how the Word of God is both the seed that brings about new life in Christ and the milk that nourishes spiritual life. As both the seed and the milk, God's Word written is to have its full effect in our lives through our sincere love for one another.

This week Peter shifts his focus away from the Word of God written (concerning the promises of God) and onto the Word of God incarnate, Jesus Christ. As he does, he lays the theological foundation for how Christians are to live publicly in a world filled with and run by those who live in opposition to Christ.

If you remember a couple weeks ago in 1:15, Peter calls his audience to "be holy... in all your behavior." Here Peter emphasizes the personal aspects of living a holy life, "not being conformed to your former lusts," but to conduct yourselves with fear because you call God "Father."

Last week, Peter's emphasis on holiness continued, but it did so by emphasizing interpersonal relationships within the church.

*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart... put aside all malice and all deceit, and hypocrisy and envy and all slander (1:22, 2:1) – actions that seem to have an interpersonal component to them.*

Now, in our passage this morning, Peter will wrap up his thought by emphasizing how the call to holiness has significant, public implications as well.

With that out of the way, let's dig into 1 Peter 1:4-12.

### 1. We are being built up by God [vv. 4-8]

- a. Verse 4 continues Peter's thought from verses 1-3. Our coming to God is not different from longing for and tasting the goodness of God in the Word of God. We come to God through His Word (which shouldn't be a surprise to any of us, but I want to point it out anyway).
- b. Another interesting piece to verse four is the pronoun, "him." It's obvious in the rest of the verse that the "him" is Jesus, but it technically refers to the Lord whose Word brings about and grows us up into our salvation. Well, that Lord is the God of the OT! The implication? All the Words of Scripture are Jesus' words! There was no problem in Peter's mind equating the divine Word of God with the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Why? Because Jesus is the Word of God, incarnate (c.f. John 1:1-3, 14).
- c. Jesus is called a "living stone" who was rejected by men, but "is choice and precious in the sight of God (the Father)" Peter will continue to develop this metaphor later, but note for now that Jesus is a living stone because of his resurrection. He may have been killed by men, but God ultimately gets the last word.
- d. Peter goes on in verse five to call us "living stones." By virtue of our union with Christ, we too are made alive and are being made by God into a "spiritual house"

- e. The “being built up” here is not talking about *individual* spiritual growth per se, but the whole of God’s project to redeem a people of His choosing. This project began way back in Genesis 12 through His promise to make Abraham into a great nation, and continued through his promise to build David’s house (2 Sam. 7)
- f. Why is God building up His people into a spiritual house? For *his* glory. Remember that the point of the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system they officiated represented God to the people and the people to God. Rightly representing God has been at the heart of God’s plan for humanity since the very beginning; and it was all designed to bring God glory. Simply put: Peter is pointing out here that all of God’s OT promises are finding their fulfillment, in part, through what God is doing in the Church – something we get to be a part of!
- g. And this work all begins with Jesus [read v. 6]. Peter quotes from Isaiah 28:16, capturing how Christ is the fulfillment of God’s promise to build an eternal structure comprised of a people whose trust is in its cornerstone.
- h. [CORNERSTONE PIC] – the furthestmost corner/cornerstones are important because of their structural and aesthetic roles.
- i. “Precious” or “honor” – I prefer the ESV’s translation in verses 6-7 over the NAS since it more clearly captures the actual value of believing on Jesus. Christians will ultimately be honored for their faith in God’s precious cornerstone. This outcome will not be shared by those who reject the Messiah, however.
- j. Dishonor wont be for those who believe in a rejected (by men) messiah, but on men who reject the Messiah [Read vv. 7b-8]
  - i. Peter again quotes from the OT, but this time from Psalm 118 (“builders” = foreign leaders opposed to the “stone” = God’s appointed king; c.f. Matt. 21:42) and Isaiah 8:14, respectively
  - ii. The point Peter is making is that the rejection of Jesus wasn’t a surprise to God. It didn’t mess with God’s plan. In fact, it was a fulfillment of it.
  - iii. [Read v. 8b] – Peter here connects the rejection of Israel’s Messiah with ‘stumbling.’ This stumbling is no accident on their part either. Their actions are

intentional and deliberate, and they are thus responsible for their “disobedience.” It is their disobedience to the word (the same word that brings life and nourishment to the believer) that Peter ties to their stumbling [read again v. 8].

- iv. But Peter doesn’t stop here. In a pretty striking clause, he adds, “and to this *doom* they were also appointed.” A few things to remember when coming across hard texts like this:
  1. All of Scripture supports man’s personal responsibility/culpability for their sin
  2. All of Scripture supports God’s sovereign, indirect rule over evil.
  3. Pastoral point: there will always be people who are opposed to God in this world. We shouldn’t despair; we shouldn’t be discouraged. Their disobedience has a God-ordained purpose. Just as our obedience has a God-ordained purpose.

Lam. 3:38	<i>Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come?</i>
Is. 45:7	<i>I form light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.</i>
Acts 2:23	<i>this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.</i>

- k. Though the world is at work opposing God (and God’s people), God too is at work in and among us. We are being built up by God!

## 2. To be a people who shine for God [vv. 9-12]

- a. Peter reminds the church of her identity and the identity of each, individual Christian.
- b. BUT you are a
  - i. Chosen race
  - ii. Royal priesthood
  - iii. Holy nation
  - iv. People for God’s own possession

*And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6).*

- c. To what end? To proclaim the excellencies of God!
- d. Why? *because* God called you out of darkness; *because* you are a people; *because* you already have received mercy – NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND! (which is why the inverse of my proposition this am would be totally off)
- e. We can't not do this about anything else, can we? If something happens to us that totally changes our life, our identity, we can't not keep quiet about it! Why are you quiet about Jesus?

## CONCLUSION/APPLICATION

As we wrap up this morning, I'm only going to touch on verses 11-12 because Ty will unpack them a bit more next week, but it's important to see Peter's flow of thought.

Christian you have an identity that is inseparable with the Church. Think about that for a moment. Yes, you are a living stone because you are in union with the Living Stone, Jesus Christ. But your stoniness means nothing if you don't understand your identity in terms of the whole of which you are a part: a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, an eternal structure (i.e. the Church) which is being built up by God.

We need each other; we need the Church to be who we really are. And it's only when we embrace this truth will we be 'structurally sound' enough to withstand what the world throws while shining for God in the darkness.

[Read vv. 11-12] Christians are called to:

1. Abstain from fleshly lusts – NOT abstain from fleshly actions, but lusts/desires. We need to starve our desires if we are to cease from sinning (c.f. Rom. 8)
2. Keep your public behavior excellent (I'll leave the 'why' for Ty)

### **(1) We are being built up by God (2) to be a people who shine for God.**

This morning, in what or in whom is your identity? Have you come to treasure that which is chosen and precious in the sight of God: Jesus Christ? Or is he an annoyance, a source of stumbling and offense in your heart?

Christian, are you working for God's approval or because you have God's approval through Christ?

Are you embracing all of God's plans or just some of them? Are you eager to reflect on and speak about the manifold excellencies of God? Is the integrity of your public conduct as strong as the eternal structure of which you are a part? Is the integrity of your private conduct just as strong?

**Family, God is at work building up His Church, get to work embracing His plans, proclaiming His excellencies, and walking in His ways.**