

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." - 1 Peter 2:9

The idea of spiritual growth being compared to the growth of a child has advantages and disadvantages. One of the disadvantages is that it can be seen as a purely individual matter, while spiritual growth always takes place in a community of believers. Part of Peter's concern was the individual spiritual growth of believers. He was also concerned with the spiritual growth of the churches to which he was writing. We tend to think that individual spiritual growth is most important and that the corporate spiritual growth of the body of Christ cannot happen until individual growth takes place. Peter would have seen both as happening together and both causing the other. For that reason he turns from the figure of speech of newborn babies to the figure of speech of ***the church as a building***.

Verses 4 and 5 form a single sentence in the Greek text and the main subject and verb are in verse 5, **you are being built into a spiritual house**. (It is important when studying 1 Peter 2:4-10 to know that every "you" is plural - "you all.") There is a condition that must be met if are to be built into a spiritual house. It is **as we are coming to** Christ that we become part of the building God is constructing. The Greek word **coming** not only meant to approach but it also carried overtones of worship. As we come in worship before Christ we will be built into a spiritual building.

Verse 4 also provides an important description of Christ. He is **the living stone**. Peter referenced Christ as **stone** from Psalm 118:22. The word **living** shows both the resurrection of Christ and his ability to give life to us. Christ is also **rejected by men**. The fact that Jesus was crucified in a cooperative effort of Jews and Romans and that his followers were being persecuted as this letter was written shows the truth of Peter's comment. In contrast to human rejection Christ was **chosen and precious in God's sight**.

Since Christ was a **living stone** and the readers have come to him then they too are **living stones** according to verse 5. The word for **stone** throughout this section is not the same as the word for Peter. *Petros* was a rock or rock formation protruding from the ground. The word **stone** in these verses is *lithos* which meant a stone already cut or dressed for use in building. As **living stones** we are **being built into a spiritual house**. The builder is God; Jesus is the foundation; and we are the building blocks carefully being constructed into a house for God.

QUESTION

1. Are you a "petros rock" or a "lithos rock"? Have you already been built (proudful, stuck in your ways) or are you being built and formed into God's house (church)?
2. Are you part of God's church (corporate) or out there on your own?

The word **house** is often used in Biblical language for a temple. Paul had used similar language to describe the church in 1 Corinthians 3:9-17 and Ephesians 2:22. These passages are the basis of the New Testament doctrine of the church as a temple of God. The New Testament is not talking about a church building for there were no church buildings back then. Rather, we the people of the church are living stones and God is

building a living temple in which he is worshipped. We are also a **holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ**. Verse 9 extends the idea of priesthood by describing believers as a **royal priesthood**, often translated a kingdom of priests or the King's priesthood.

QUESTION

1. Do you see yourself as a "royal priesthood" or a "holy nation"?
2. How can this affect your outlook on life?

Peter returns in verse 6 to the idea of Jesus as a **stone**. He quotes Isaiah 28:16, which contains a speech by God against the rulers of Jerusalem who have disobeyed but who feel secure by their own devices, the political alliances they have forged. In the speech God compared himself to a builder building a new construction in Jerusalem. He will lay a cornerstone of his own choice and of high quality. The building will stand because of its firm foundation; anyone can put their trust in it and not be disappointed.

Peter identifies Christ as that **cornerstone**. The church is the new building that God is constructing and it is built on the foundation of Jesus. Anyone who trusts in Christ will not be disappointed or let down. The building will hold. Peter then notes in verse 7 that Jesus is **precious to you who believe**. On the other hand, **to those who do not believe, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner."**

QUESTION

1. Have you put your trust in Christ? He will not disappoint you.
2. How does he prove Himself precious to you?
3. Is He precious to you and how do you show it?

Different translations and commentators take one of three positions regarding the meaning of Christ as **head of the corner**. The traditional understanding is represented by the translation, "chief cornerstone." This view believes that Jesus is being compared to the first stone laid in the construction of a building. The side walls are laid in alignment with its sides and the walls are built vertically plumb to the vertical edge of the cornerstone. Thus the three dimension lines of the chief cornerstone determine that the building is straight, square, and plumb. The church that God is building with us as living stones takes its lines and angles from Jesus. Our task as living stones is to stay in line with him.

QUESTION

1. Is Jesus your cornerstone? The foundation of your life?
2. Is your life "straight, square and plumb" with the Cornerstone?

Peter continues his thought in verse 8 with a quotation from Isaiah 8:14. Though Jesus has become the head of the corner despite the unbelief of those who reject him, he is also a **stone of stumbling and a rock of offense** to them. Peter notes then that they stumble because they are disobedient to the message. To his readers who were facing persecution this was an important word. Disobedience by failing to persevere could rob them of the rich and precious relationship they were enjoying with Christ. Failure to obey could lead to eternal condemnation.

Verses 9-10 again describe the Gentile readers of 1 Peter in the language the Old Testament used for Israel. They were a **chosen people**. This concept is found throughout the Old Testament, but Isaiah 43:20 uses the exact words that appear here. The phrases **royal priesthood** or kingdom of priests and **holy nation** are both

taken from Exodus 19:6. A **people belonging to God** or people of God's possession is an expression found in both Exodus 19:5 and Isaiah 43:21.

QUESTION

1. Do you feel "royal"? How are you made royal?
2. Are you "holy"?
3. Do you "belong to God" in every way?

Verse 10 turns to Hosea 2:23 to describe the readers as people who **were once not a people, but now you are the people of God**. They are people who **once had not received mercy but now you have received mercy**. These words from Hosea were originally proclaimed to encourage Israel that God would redeem them from the punishment they had brought upon themselves. Peter beautifully turns the words to apply to Gentile churches. People whom the Jews called fuel for the fires of hell had become the people who belonged to God.

The church is a community of grace. Only by God's great and gracious love for us do we exist as a community of faith. Because we have received mercy and grace without limit there must be a longing to share that mercy and grace with others.

QUESTION

1. Do you remember when you were "once not a people of God"?
2. How is your life different now that you are "the people of God"?
3. Do you remember when you "once had not received mercy"?
4. What is life like now that "you have received mercy?"

NOTES BELOW ARE FROM THE WEEKEND SERVICES

Ephesians 1:1 NIV, AMP

TWO MAIN TERMS

1. **SAINTS** – "separated or set apart to God and His purpose"

- 1 Peter 2:9 NIV, Message
- Galatians 1:3-5 NKJV
- Ephesians 1:7 NIV

You cannot be a **CHRISTIAN** without being a **SAINT**.

You cannot be a **SAINT** and a **CHRISTIAN** without being **SEPARATED** in a radical sense from the world.

2. **FAITHFUL** – "expressing faith"

- John 20:27-29 AMP, Message
- Jude 3 NIV, Message

- Jude 4 NLT
- Matthew 25:21, 23 NIV
- Matthew 26:26-30 Message