

The Christian's Identity in This World

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Preacher: Olivier Favre

[0 : 0 0] 1 Peter chapter 2, and we will read verses 4 through 10. As you come to him, the living stone rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For in the scripture it says, See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.

Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone and the stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.

They stumble because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

[1 : 3 0] Brother, come and preach to us. It's really a pleasure to be with you this morning. To see you again. Last time it was nine years ago.

Many things happened to many of you. But the Lord is faithful and it's always good to be here and see you. And new faces and old faces.

I've met several times in the past. Many of you have a garden. Well, of course, sorry for my English. I apologize for everyone and especially for the ones who have to translate in sign language. I don't know how you can do that from my English. But may the Spirit of God be there and help her especially.

Many of you have a garden or field. I would like to know what do you do with the stone in your garden.

[2 : 3 1] Usually, we remove them. We put them aside. Why do we do that? It's because stone don't have any life.

And they don't produce anything. And I even have observed, at least in Europe, that some people put stones all over some part of the garden.

Why do they do that? To make sure that nothing will grow. And this morning, the Apostle Peter is going to use a story of stones to draw our attention to our new identity as Christians in this world.

Because in the first chapter of his letter, he taught the Christians that they are pilgrims, foreigners, immigrants in this world.

And now, he wants to encourage us to see that, yes, we are pilgrims. Yes, we are immigrants. But a strange kind of immigrants and pilgrims.

[3 : 5 5] Because we have a special identity in God's eyes. And for that, he uses a story of stones.

And he begins by showing us, in verses 4 to 8, the living stone foundation of the church. The living stone foundation of the church.

In verse 4, Peter draws our attention to a living stone which we must approach. Don't you find that invitation a bit strange?

Because who among us has ever seen a living stone? All stones, all stones are dead.

That one comes from the pastor's garden, but it's dead in the other ones. I mean, all stones are dead. A living stone doesn't exist.

[5 : 0 0] And if it would exist, it would no longer be a stone. Because by nature, a stone is dead.

So, why does Peter use such an expression and tell us, come to the living stone? Strange question. Because this expression comes from the Old Testament.

Which repeatedly announced the coming of salvation by means of a stone. A special stone. Isaiah 28, 16.

Therefore, thus say the Lord God. Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for the foundation of Zion. A tried stone.

A precious cornerstone. A sure foundation. Whoever believes will not act hastily. Psalm 118, 22-23. [6 : 09] The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing. It's marvelous in our eyes.

And who is all this about? Peter understood it. This is why in Acts chapter 4, verses 11 and 12, he can say to the Pharisees, He, Jesus, is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.

Nor is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

So, this special living stone spoken here is our Savior, Jesus Christ. It is a life.

It is a life. A living stone. Because Jesus is the life. More than that, he is the one who triumphs to the death.

[7 : 23] Therefore, in him there is life, eternal life. John 14, 6 says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

John 3, 36 says, He who believes in the Son has eternal life. And he who does not believe the Son shall not see life.

But the wrath of God abides on him. He's alive. He's the cornerstone. Verse 6.

That means the first stone that was laid in a construction, the construction of a building, and determined the whole orientation of the building.

And Jesus is this stone. Because the whole people of God, the whole church, is founded on Jesus Christ alone.

[8 : 28] This is why Paul says in Ephesians 2, 19 to 20. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

It is a chosen and precious stone, still in verse 6. Because Christ is the beloved Son of God, the most precious thing the Father had.

And he chooses to give him for our salvation. So Christ is the foundation of our faith.

And he's able, he's also the foundation of the church. As Peter understood in Matthew 16, 18, because what did Jesus, sorry, because what did say Jesus when Peter said to him, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God?

Jesus answered that he would build his church on this stone, this confession of faith, and that the gate of hell would not prevail against it, would not resist to him.

[10 : 08] That is why there is no other way that can lead you, that can lead us to God. No other way to get eternal life, because Christ alone, Christ alone is the living stone, the cornerstone through which we can receive life and be reconciled to God.

And this is what Peter teaches us now by showing us who we are as Christians. We've seen the living stone foundation of the church, now the second point, and there will be a third later, but the second point, the living stones, plural, members of the church.

In these verses, Peter teaches us that as far as our present on eternal identity is concerned, everything is connected to what we do of Jesus, the living stone.

That is why the apostle starts in verse 4 with, come to him. And this expression is a term that refers to the way the Jews would approach God in the worship in the Old Testament.

So, the true members of the church, the true members of the church are those who come to Jesus Christ as the Jews approach God in the Old Testament.

[12 : 03] They came to him through the sacrifice, through the blood that was shed, in an act of dependence of God, conscious of their guilt.

And Peter tells us that Jesus Christ as the living stone gives life to all those who approach him this way.

And what happens when they come to him the right way? These dead stones that we are become living stones in their terms.

That's what he said in verse 5. verse 5. You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.

A holy priesthood. And what does Christ do with them?

[13 : 20] Look at the end of this verse 5. He built them up to form a spiritual house, a holy priesthood that offers spiritual victims pleasing to God through Jesus Christ.

It means that each who come to Christ in this way, Jesus makes him a stone, a member of his church whose mission is to bear spiritual fruit to the glory of God.

Spiritual fruit by being transformed in your life, but spiritual fruit too by spreading the gospel around you and seeing people like spiritual stones coming to him.

all this is coming through Jesus Christ because he is the one who transforms us.

And note that Jesus uses stones to build his house and not bricks. bricks. And what is the difference between stones and bricks?

[14 : 51] It is that bricks are all the same and it's quite easy to put them one beside the other. But stones are all different and not two stones are the same.

And to make them fit together correctly, it requires a lot of cutting and adjusting. And that's exactly what Christ does in his church.

Doesn't it? He puts us in the church next to people who have corners that rub against our corners and hurt it harms.

Why does it hurt? Because this is the way we grow in our likeness to Jesus Christ.

We become more pleasing to God through this hard and difficult work of, I don't know how you say that, but you understand it.

[15 : 57] I mean one against the other. so don't be surprised that the life in the church is not as easy as you wish.

Don't be surprised that the other Christians are so different than you are. Because it's the normal way God uses to make us more like Jesus.

And if you have not yet come to Christ with this attitude of dependence that I just described, come to him now.

For this is how you will become a genuine living stone, a member of Christ's church. This is how you will get eternal life and escape the dramatic issue of those who reject him.

For look at what happens to those who reject the living stone. This is written in verse 7 and 8. Now to you who believe, this stone is precious, but to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become a capstone and a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.

[17 : 24] They stumble because they obey the message, which is also what they were destined for. That precious living stone has become a stone of stumbling, a rock that makes them fall, spiritually speaking.

It means that those who reject Jesus Christ fall under God's judgment. And probably that Peter is thinking firstly of the nation of Israel that had rejected Jesus Christ and fall under God's judgment and according to the eternal plan of God.

But it's true of everyone of us. Therefore know, sorry, therefore to know what is your eternal destiny this morning, the only question you have to ask of yourself is, what did I do with this living stone? did I consider it like a dead stone? Did I reject it? Or did I embrace it?

And I beg you, don't stay in the dark about this. That's the more important question of all your life. If you don't know where you stand, go and see your pastor, see a mature Christian and talk to him because your eternal destiny is at stake.

[19 : 28] Having portrayed the dramatic state of those who reject the living stone, Peter now returns to the living stones with more details in verse 9 and 10.

And that's the last point of this preaching. the new identity of the living stones, members of the church. So far in his letter, Peter has told us that all Christians, having been elected by God, are already citizens of heaven.

But as long as they are not yet in heaven, they are in this world strangers, immigrants, immigrants. And this statute can bring very often hostility from the world and even trouble, discouragement in our life.

We are citizens of heaven, but it's so hard in this life. Therefore, in order to encourage us, now Peter describes our new identity.

he shows us how we are in God's eyes and how we should look at ourselves then in this present life.

[20 : 57] Do you know that you are a chosen race? Verse 9, Do you know that you are a royal priesthood?

Do you know that you are a holy nation? Do you know that you are a reading people or a people of God? These are the four expressions that describe what we are, our Christian identity, the way God sees us and the way we should see ourselves, individually, and as a church.

And I will very briefly take them one after the other just to think a little bit about that. You are a chosen race or chosen people.

This expression reminds us that we don't become Christian and members of the church by personal choice, but because God chooses us.

As it was already the case in Old Testament with Israel. And why did God choose Israel to be his witness among all the other nations?

[22 : 25] Was it because they were particularly great, particularly glorious? did they have a special culture? No.

Listen to Deuteronomy 7, verse 6 and 7. The Lord your God has chosen you, out of all the people on the earth, to be his people.

He treasured his treasured possession. It was not because you were more numerous than other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all people.

God chose the fewest, the least of all the people of us. Why did he do this? So that all the glory would come to him.

And you think the thing changed when he chose people in the new covenant? No. It's not because we are gold that he chooses us.

[23 : 37] We are as dead as the other, as dead as that stone. But God chose us because we were unworthy.

He chose us to make his possession. 1 Corinthians 1, verses 26 to 29. Consider your own cold brothers.

Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in this world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. and God chose what is low and despised in the world things that are not to reduce to nothing things that are so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

So, dear brothers and sisters, if you are members of God's church today, you have no merit to show. For it's by grace that God has made you a new race.

[24 : 57] You and you see this truth must have an impact on the way we live in this world. For if we have been chosen by pure grace, we should approach the other sinners, non-Christians, with humility and compassion.

because if God has not been gracious to us, we would still be like this stone, like them.

So, let your church be known as a people who welcome sinners with compassion, tenderness, and love to lead them to discover the freedom that we find in Jesus Christ, the living stone.

a chosen race. You are a chosen race. You are, secondly, a royal priesthood. Maybe the term priesthood is a bit complicated, but it refers to the function of the priest who offered sacrifices in the Old Testament.

In their function, they would represent God in front of man and represent man in front of God. They would be what we call a mediator.

[26 : 14] people. And what does Peter say here? That all those living stones, all those who have placed their faith in Christ, are now priests.

That means that we all have a free access to God because we are united to God, the mediator. of his son, Jesus Christ, who reconciles to God. And this expression goes even further because it speaks of a royal priesthood.

I don't know if you know, but it was impossible, not allowed in Old Testament, to be priest and king at the same time.

All those who tried to do that, fall under God's judgment. This is what happened to King Saul, who wanted to offer the sacrifice.

[27 : 25] This is what happened to King Uzziah, who entered the temple and became a leper. But what does he say to us here?

That in addition to being priests, we are kings. What an incredible news for foreigners and immigrants in this world.

How are we kings? We are kings because Jesus Christ shares his kingship with us. For he is king of kings, through his victory over heaven, over sin, over the powers of this world, and over Satan. And as Christians, we already share his kingship, even if we don't see it so much. It's a reality. Do you see how such a truth can keep us peaceful and joyful even when the world oppresses us and despises us?

It is such a truth that should enable us to sing even in difficult situations like Paul and Silas who were in prison and who could sing the glory of the Lord.

[29 : 01] Chosen race. You are a royal priesthood. You are a holy nation. What constitutes a nation? It's an identity of nature.

It's a central government. It's a constitution and laws to which we submit and identify ourselves. And when he uses the word holy here, it's probably to emphasize that the church is a special, unique, particular nation for God.

A nation who has to become more like Christ. Is this not the case? Think about it.

What brings us together today? is it the color of our skin? Is it our age? Is it our nationality?

Is it our taste? We were in John's house, around the table, five different nationalities, eating about the same food, a Kenyan, a Portuguese, a Belgian, an American, and a Swiss man?

[30 : 25] No. How? Why were we there together? The only thing that really brings us together is Jesus Christ, our King.

It's because we have come close to him that we have come close to one another, and that we have become living stones. And this is what makes the church unique, holy nation.

So when you live in this world, when you are surrounded by people from different nations, don't forget the richness of this image.

God wants to save people of all nations, all kind of people. That is why in the church there is no room for racism and segregation of any kind.

So don't be afraid of your neighbor, strange foreign neighbor. They have to talk to them about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[31 : 42] Maybe one day he will be a living stone with you. And finally, a redeemed people. We could also translate that expression God's own people because the idea of redemption is that it refers at what happened in the Bible about slavery.

It says that someone had to redeem us to pay the price so that we would not be slaves anymore, to free us from slavery.

And this is exactly what God did. He sent his most precious son to pay the price we couldn't pay, to free us from the hands of Satan and to make living stones of us, to make a church, a building, a people, a nation, a royal priesthood of us.

So you see that last expression underlines that the church is God's property because he bought us back at a high price.

And why did he do so? the end of verse 9 will tell it to us. In order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[33 : 26] Dear brothers and sisters, God redeemed you to constitute a people who speaks of his grace, who testify of his mercy in this lost world.

And even if this brings suffering and oppression to you, let us not lose heart because we are safe. For if God has made us his precious possession, then he will watch over us so that no one will snatch us out of his hand.

Therefore, next time you remove stones from your garden, think about the glorious news of the gospel.

we were like these stones and through Jesus Christ, God made us living stones forever and forever.

[34 : 41] Amen.