

# The Stabilizing Power of Our Identity in Christ

*Our Identity in Christ*

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter 2. We continue our exposition of this letter of Peter. We're going to move into a new section today, verses 4 to 10, that we'll be looking at for two or three Sundays, Lord willing. We're going to see that this passage is calling us to see, again, one of the big themes in this letter is our identity in Christ, who we really are, and that understanding our identity is key to doing what God's called us to do and being what he's called us to be, and enduring. Remember this letter was written to strengthen believers in the first century who were experiencing persecution and opposition and were about to experience even more. Peter writes this letter a little less than a year before a widespread persecution breaks out across the Roman Empire. And so, in the providence of God, he writes to prepare those believers in the area to whom he writes, Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. He writes to the churches there to strengthen them for the upcoming challenge that they will face, the storm that is brewing, that is coming their way. He wants them to be strong and courageous and to be stable and strengthened and to endure.

And so, we've seen that the letters aimed at that. That's the main purpose of the letter. And each passage contributes to that. How can we bear up as faithful Christians in the face of increasing opposition? How can we be faithful to the Lord when the world hates us? This is the heartbeat of the Apostle Peter as he writes this epistle. And so, it is good for us as Christians who live in an increasingly anti-Christian age, post-Christian era, someone has referred to our present time in American culture. And so, how we can bear up, that's the burden of this. And I was thinking about this idea and how it's really a theme throughout the Scriptures. Psalm 11 asks a really powerful question. The psalmist says, well, actually, the psalmist is saying he's going to trust in the Lord. The Lord is his refuge in verse 1. But then he shares with us the word of a friend or counselor who says to him, you know, "Flee like a bird to your mountain. You should flee." And he says, "when the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" That's this friend or maybe an enemy who's counseling him to run and he says, "when the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do," and the psalmist answers, "The Lord is in His holy temple. His eyes behold all that is going on."

So even when the foundations are destroyed, when society is feeling the effects of seismic shifts in the culture, when we see that happening, when the ground seems to be

moving underneath our feet, what are we to do? We're to remember that the Lord is in his holy temple and this is exactly what Peter is calling his people, the believers in the first century to, and us to as well. He's actually going to tell them in this passage that, yes, you see the world changing around, you see the opposition growing, the storms, maybe the earth beginning to move, what are you to do? You are to remember that God is in his holy temple and the wonder of wonders is that you are the very temple of God, that not only is God in, God is no longer in a building, in a structure, he's actually, his presence is manifest supremely in believers who gather together to worship him. He is in our midst. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our stronghold in a way that's more profoundly true now than ever before in redemptive history. And so this is what he's going to encourage them. This is the larger point of this passage, verses 4 to 10. He's telling them you are a spiritual house so understand that, know that, know who you are, know why you're here, and know what you're to do.

Thinking about the seismic shifts and the fright that comes to us and as we see things changing around us, certainly can't stop to think about the earthquake in Turkey that was prayed for earlier. Read this morning the death tolls up to 46,000 people. And one estimate recently that to rebuild all of the damage will cost about \$84 billion. Interestingly enough, the region of Turkey is one of the regions that is hit by this earthquake is one of the regions to which Peter writes Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Galatia, and Cappadocia. Cappadocia is southeastern Turkey and so that's the area this letter was addressed to where they are presently still trying to rescue those who've been buried under rubble. But the Scripture tells us when we see spiritual earthquakes, we're not to be disheartened. We're not to be undone. We're not to fear what they fear. We are to know that the Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord is with us who are in Christ.

So let's read verses 4 to 10 of 1 Peter chapter 2.

4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," 8 and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. 9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, we praise You for the gift of Your word that as we read in the previous that the word of the Lord endures forever. The word of the Lord is that which gives new life and new birth and that which strengthens us to grow and mature in Christ. We pray as we come to Your word today that Your Holy Spirit would minister it to our hearts, that You would open our eyes. Convict us Lord, show us where we need to repent and believe and be glorified in Your people. May we be a holy temple for Your glory to dwell in. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

So the passage here is calling us to see ourselves rightly, to understand who we are. So the sense of the theme of the message, these next few messages on this passage are "The Stabilizing Power of Our Identity in Christ." The stabilizing power of our identity in Christ. One of the things that is a very relevant subject today is identity, right? It is the rage. You know, who are you? And the culture is all about defining who we are in worldly ways. You know, your identity is your ethnicity. Your identity is your nationality. Your identity is whatever you make it to be gender-wise. All of these things we're told, "This is who you are. Be who you are. Be authentic. Define it for yourself." But God calls us to define our identity, to let him define our identity from his word. He tells us who we are. He tells us why we're here. I mentioned last week that the first thing God did after he created man was he spoke to him. Before man had sinned, he needed God's word to tell him who he was, why he was here. God says, "I made you in My image, and you're to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. You're in My image to reflect My glory, and your place in the world is to rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it." Man could not make sense of who he was without God telling him. That's before sin entered the world. He was perfect in the sense of he was sinless. His mind was not darkened. His affections were not alienated. His will was not bound. Man in the pristine state still needed the word of God to show him who he is. How much more do we need the word of God to tell us who we are and why we're here and what we're to do? And wonderfully, this passage reminds us of this in a powerful way. He says, "Listen, you need to know who you are and why you're here," and he's going to say in this passage, "You are the temple of God and you are a holy priesthood." So we're going to talk about holy priesthood, Lord willing, next Sunday, we're going to talk about the temple of God today. The stabilizing power of knowing you are the temple of the living God is the theme really of this message, knowing that you are the temple of the living God.

I want to call your attention to one thing that at the beginning, before we dig into the text, you notice that most Bibles indent in a special way Old Testament quotations and you can see if you look carefully that we have three Old Testament quotations in our passage. Peter quotes three times from the Old Testament. In verse 6, he quotes from Isaiah 28:14. In verse 7, he quotes from Psalm 118:22 and from Psalm 8:14. These three passages, Isaiah 28, Psalm 118, Isaiah 8. One of the things that's instructive about that is it's always good to take some time and we will do this briefly, but I'm going to tell you about it in case I don't get there as much as I want to, it's your homework to go back and look at it. But what you see about these three passages is that the people of God are in tumultuous

circumstance in these three passages. Now he's bringing it up mainly because it talks about Jesus as the foundation stone, the cornerstone, and we're being built upon him. He's bringing it up to show us that we are now the temple, that we are built upon the foundation, right? But he brings it up from passages where God talks about this in the Old Testament. Our passage is a great difficulty for God's people. Isaiah 28 and chapter 8, they're dealing with, I mean, they're dealing with all kinds of seismic shifts in the political landscape, social upheaval, political turmoil, the threat of invasion. They think that early on, they think it's the Syrians and the Northern Kingdom of Israel are going to invade and later they find out, no, it's the Assyrians who are going to invade and what the Lord is basically saying in those passages is, "Listen, when things," first of all, God's doing all of that, that's the encouraging thing. You read these passages, whenever things go haywire, whenever things, you know, anarchy begins to reign, God says, "I'm the one who's brought it about." He's sovereign. Read those passages and you'll see this. When Israel is experiencing all kinds of just social unrest and the Lord says, "I have done this. I'm bringing judgment. I'm giving you what you wanted. You wanted to live your life without My direct intervention. I'm letting you know what that looks like. I'm bringing judgment. This is what it looks like to live apart from Me."

The things that he talks about as you read through Isaiah, your rulers become fools. That's one of the ways God judges his people is the rulers become foolish. You're ruled over by people who don't know what they're doing. Read it. It's all there. It even happens in Egypt. He judges the Egyptians. He says, "I'm doing the same thing to the Egyptians I'm doing to the people of Judah." They're being ruled over by children. The wise men of Pharaoh have become fools. You see this especially in Isaiah 19. This is a recurrent theme. So when anarchy comes, when cultural chaos grows, God is doing it. It's his judgment. But when he judges, when he brings this kind of calamity, there's always a ray of hope. There's always a refuge offered to those who will repent and believe. When he strikes, he heals. That's what he says to the Egyptians in Isaiah 19. "I strike and I heal." And he talks about how many Egyptians he's going to save. He's going to save Egyptians and Assyrians. I mean, our God is a God of grace and mercy. So you see this, when these things happen, what's the message? Turn to the Lord. Those who don't know God, turn to God. Those who know God, cling to the Lord. In the time when the world is unsettled and things are moving about like this, there is a cornerstone. You see the image? There is a strong refuge of stability and we know his name is Jesus. So build upon him. Cling to him when everything else is going like this. Christ is a solid rock, a refuge.

So these are the Old Testament passages and the idea behind them that bleeds into what Peter is saying in this passage. Now with that said, we're going to look at this under three points this morning. Essentially, we're going to look at those questions. Who are you? The first point is who are you? And the call is to see yourself rightly. We need to know who we are if we're going to bear up in times like this. And what he says about us in verse 5 is that if you are in Christ, you are a living stone. Look at verse 5, "you also as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house." If you've been born again, if you've placed your faith in Jesus Christ, if you're trusting in him alone for your salvation, you are a living stone in the temple of God, the spiritual temple that he's building.

Now one of the things we need to do to see ourselves rightly is see ourselves as a living stone, but I want you to see that even the phrase, it doesn't say you are a living stone, it says you also as living stones, plural, are being built up. All of the verbs in this text are plural. I mean, the ones that relate to us, you all, not you singular. You all are living stones. In fact, the text is emphatic. Literally in the Greek, it said you yourselves also are living stones, could have translated it that way. It's the emphasis of the passage. So we're not to see ourselves we need to let go of an individualistic mindset. So important for Americans and those who've grown up in Western culture to remember that we tend to have far too atomistic a view of ourselves. We think of ourselves as independent. Modern evangelicalism has been characterized by this. It's about, you know, modern evangelicalism has emphasized things like the personal relationship with Christ to the point that it's about you and Jesus and other people in the church don't really matter, so that many people who claim to be Christians think they have no need for the church.

I want you to look at this passage and see how foreign that is to what Peter is saying. You're coming to Christ, he says, you're coming to Jesus and as you're coming to Jesus, you are being built into a house. You're a living stone being built into a house. You have no meaning apart from the house. Do you see that? What good is a brick apart from the rest of the bricks that it's connected to? Occasionally, you might be on a, you know, maybe at your house, you have you have brick and you have a brick that was left over. What is it good for? It's good for a doorstep. You might throw something at, you know, an animal you want to probably not going to do very well with a brick I don't think but you could you could try. That might be a use for it. A brick apart from the building is not a brick. It's just a rock. And so the stone made and cut for the temple is not anything apart from the temple. It's unthinkable to the New Testament to live the Christian life as a Lone Ranger Christian. Unthinkable. If you love Jesus, you love the church he loves. You need to. I understand as Americans, we're kind of wired this way. This is one of the wrong ways we think. We think atomistically, individualistically, rugged individuality but we have to lay that aside if we're going to have the mind of God in the Scriptures. We talked about that last week. Remember that word *logikos*. We want to think God's thoughts. We want to think with his reason, his logic, his wisdom. That's what it meant when we saw the pure milk of the word, milk of the word, the logic of God in the Scriptures.

And the other example that makes this powerful, one of the other key metaphors for the church is the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4. How can the body, I mean, how can you be a member of the body and be disconnected from the body? Disconnection means death. Separate from the rest of the body and you die. You see the metaphors that God uses? The church, I've heard people say, "Where do you find membership in the church in the New Testament?" Well, you don't actually find the word "membership," but you find the concept that the word is explicitly nowhere, the concept is implicitly everywhere. You don't find the word "Trinity" in the Bible either, but the concept is there everywhere, implicitly. So is membership.

So to see ourselves rightly, to know who we are, we are a part of a temple, a building for the glory of God. Scripture makes this clear in a number of places. Let's look at a few of them just so you see how this is a key metaphor in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians

3:16. Paul says there, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" That is a "you" plural there, not a "you" singular. He's saying, "Do you not," the Corinthians, the church at Corinth, "Do you all not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" There's a sense in which he also says in 1 Corinthians 6, individually our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Yes, that's true. But don't miss the fact that corporately we are truly the temple as well. In fact, there's greater emphasis on that aspect than the other. The Holy Spirit comes to indwell every believer. Yes, praise God for that. We're sealed. We can be filled with the Holy Spirit. That's what we're supposed to do, be filled with the Spirit. But there's something profound about the body of Christ gathering together and God dwelling among us.

Turn over to 2 Corinthians 6:16. Paul is talking about the need to live holy lives, to be separated from all that is evil and he says in verse 16, "Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God and they shall be My people.'" Listen, he's saying, how can you have, you know, sin that you're just allowing to run rampant in your midst? You are the temple of the living God. Imagine to allow sin to go unchecked in the church, in our lives, is to be like the pictures you see in Ezekiel. Read Ezekiel, the first 10, 11 chapters, and you see the wickedness, the actual wickedness of the people of God in Ezekiel's day. He has these visions where the Lord shows him powerfully how wicked they are. He goes into the temple courts and like one of the visions is in the court of the women, the women are all bowing down, worshiping the sun. Another one of the visions, they're in the temple court, the temple of Yahweh, and they're worshiping the sun. It's one of those things that is supposed to make you, you know, want to tear your clothes, like the sign of contrition in the Old Testament. One of the most horrific ones is he digs a hole into the wall, God tells him to dig a hole into the wall and he digs a hole into the wall and he finds inside of the temple the elders of the people worshiping and there are all kinds of unclean animals there and they are worshiping false gods, and it's like all of this evil, wicked stuff is defiling the temple. How awful is this sight? And what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 6, he's capturing that same mindset and saying, "Do you realize that when sin is in our camp and we're not repenting ourselves and confessing, we're all sinners, we're not helping each other pursue righteousness, it's just like that, it's defiling the temple." But the point is you are the temple.

Ephesians 2, keep turning toward the back of your Bible, past Galatians to Ephesians 2:19 to 22. He's telling the Ephesian Christians, "Who are you?" He's talking to mainly Gentile believers, but Jews and Gentiles and he says, you now "are no longer strangers and aliens," here he has in mind particularly the Gentile believers, you "are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints," with the holy ones, "and are of God's household." You're fellow citizens with the Jewish believers who've accepted Christ. You're equal status citizens with them, Gentiles. "Having been built," verse 20, "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." So you are the temple of God.

Now, so who are you? You're the temple of God. You're a living stone in the temple of God. Second point this morning: why are you here? Why are you a block of this temple? Why are you a living stone? What's the purpose of the temple? The purpose of the temple is to make the presence of God known in the world. The temple was the footstool of God. It was the one place that, now listen, God in strictest sense, God is everywhere, right? There's no place where God is not. He is omnipresent. He fills the earth. The whole earth is full of his glory and yet to reveal himself, to make us see him, he chose to make himself known in this one place in history. The tabernacle first, that was the portable temple, the tent of meeting, and then the temple, the permanent place. This was where he made himself known.

In fact, when he gave the tabernacle, when he gave the temple, he made comments like this, you find this in 1 Chronicles 28:2, "David rose to his feet and said," this is David who wanted to build a house for God, he wanted to make the tabernacle, the portable tent, now permanent. Remember, God didn't let him do it. He let Solomon, his son, do it. But then King David rose to his feet and said, "Hear me, my brothers and my people; I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD and for the footstool of our God, and I made preparations for building." So the ark of the covenant dwells there. God's feet, as it were, touch. It's the point where God touches the world, the temple. In some sense, I mean, like I said, he's everywhere in one sense, but in another sense, he's making himself known in a whole different way, manifest presence at this point, the temple.

Psalm 132:7 says this, "Let us go into His dwelling place; Let us worship at His footstool." This is one of the hymns where they're encouraging one another on the way to Jerusalem. "Let us go into His dwelling place; Let us worship at His footstool." His dwelling place is footstool of the temple.

So now that was the old covenant, now he makes himself known in his people. Now I want you to see this, the manifestation of his presence. I want to walk through history, the biblical history with this. Turn with me to Exodus 40 and what I'm going to suggest to you as we read these passages, I think this is what God is now wanting to do in us as a body when we gather, when we minister to one another, and when we just live our everyday lives. He wants us to be manifesting this, especially when we gather, but through our ministry together 24/7. The book of Exodus shows all these strict requirements God gave to Moses about exactly what he was to do to build the tent of meeting. I mean, down to, you know, every measurement of everything. You read through Exodus and you see he gives the instructions and they're down to, you know, one cubit by two and a half cubits. Overlay it with gold. Form this particular thing on the corners. And it goes into great detail and then about 12 chapters later, you'll hear where Moses did that and it almost gives word for word the same thing that you heard 12 chapters ago.

Now think about that. It would have been a lot easier to say, "Hey, Moses did exactly what God told him 11 chapters ago." Wouldn't it? I mean, especially if you remember that when they were writing the Bible onto the text, paper was so valuable, so costly. I mean, you don't want to waste space. I would never write it again myself. I hate to, don't

you get tired of writing when you're writing? Of course, some of you young people don't even know what that is. Writing is you take something with ink in it and you actually make letters. You don't do this, more like this for our young people, right? It's pretty amazing what they can do like that though. No, so why would you write it again? Well, God has him say it again, almost word for word over and over and over on every single detail. Why is it? He's emphasizing the Lord's sovereign will in determining how he's to be worshiped. "I'm going to be worshiped the way I say I'm to be worshiped, not the way you invent in your own heart. No, Moses did exactly what I told him to do."

And then at the end of that, after all these chapters of him laying out what to do, and then this is what Moses did, exactly what he did, you come to chapter 40 in verse 32, "When they entered the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, just as the LORD had commanded Moses." That phrase occurs over and over, dozens of times in the last few chapters, "just as the Lord commanded Moses." They did exactly what the Lord had commanded Moses. In verse 33, "He erected the court all around the tabernacle," they're setting up now the tent of meeting, "and the altar, and hung up the veil for the gateway of the court. Thus Moses finished the work." Did the work of building the place for God's footstool, for God's presence to be made manifest and look what happens. Verse 34, "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." You see, God wanted him to build a place so his glory could be made known, made visible. This is the Shekinah glory of God, the manifestation of God's matchless, supreme value, his beauty, his power, his majesty made visible.

Okay, now we go ahead 500 years roughly to 1 Kings 7. This is the account of Solomon building that temple that we read David talk about a moment ago from Chronicles. 1 King 7:51. Again, you have great detail of what was done, but then you come to verse 51. "Thus all the work that King Solomon performed in the house of the LORD was finished. And Solomon brought in the things dedicated by his father David, the silver and the gold and the utensils, and he put them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD." Chapter 8, verse 1, "Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes." Jump down to verse 10. "It happened that when the priests came from the holy place," so the priests have taken stuff into the holy place and put it in there. "When the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD." Just like it did when Moses finished his house. "So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD."

It's interesting when the temple, that's the second, I mean, that's the first temple that Solomon built and just like when Moses built the tabernacle, the glory filled it. We read a couple of years ago, well, whenever we were doing Ezra and Nehemiah, Ezra 5, we saw the beginning of the building of the house of the Lord. Remember the house is destroyed in 586 BC by the Babylonians. Seventy years later, they come back and rebuild the temple. They finished the temple 70 years later in 516, started building in 535, but it takes them longer to get it done. We read that account. But when they finished it, you know what didn't happen? No cloud filled the temple. It was actually a smaller temple. Remember the people that were building it, according to Haggai, they wept. We saw that



in Ezra too, they wept. Some people were weeping over the fact that, you know, that it was such a poor, poor temple compared to what it had been before. They were old enough to remember the former temple. And then others were shouting for joy and the shout, the wailing of sadness and the shout of joy was all heard together and you couldn't tell the difference between one and the other.

But the prophet Haggai says in Haggai 2, the glory of this temple that they had just built where there was no glory yet shown, the glory of this temple will be greater than the glory of the first. When did that happen? It happened when a young man and a young bride, Joseph and Mary, brought Jesus into the temple. And Anna and Simeon, they saw the glory. They knew it was him. He didn't have a name tag on saying, "I'm the Messiah." They just brought the baby in and Anna and Simeon said, "That's him. That's the One we've waited for. That's the chosen One of God." The glory filled the temple.

And then Jesus then in John 1:14 says, listen, and John plays on this in John 1:14 and John 2, remember how John describes the coming of Christ? He gives him the title, the Word. "The Word was with God. The Word was God." And then he says in John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled for a while among us." Actually, the word literally, it says, we usually translate it "dwelt," right? Your Bible says, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," but literally in the Greek, it means "pitched his tent." John is saying Jesus' flesh was the tabernacle. The temple itself is no longer glorious. The temple is Jesus' body. That's where the glory is being made known. That's the point at which the footstool of God, God's magnificent glory, his Shekinah glory is made known in Christ. And so John says, "He tabernacled for a while among us and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

And Jesus in John 2, right after that, is at the temple and he gets into a confrontation with the Jewish leaders who are wanting to know why he's doing the signs he's doing. He says, "Show us a sign." He cleanses the temple. "Show us a sign to show the authority that You have." And he says, "I'll give you this sign, destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it." They're like, "You're crazy. It took 40 some odd years to build this temple and You're going to raise it in three days?" And John writes, "He was speaking of the temple of His body." That's the temple. The other temple is obsolete, just like the tabernacle. Once the temple was built by Solomon, they didn't keep the tabernacle as, you know, a franchise that you could go to. It's out. It's done. It's now the temple. And when Jesus came, now the temple is no longer the temple. Christ's body is the temple. And now that Jesus has gone to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit, I mean, he also being God, he fills the world himself, he's here, too and yet physically his body is in heaven. He says, "Now you are the temple of the living God. You gather together."

Now, this is where God's glory, the glory cloud is supposed to be made known in us. That's your identity and so, listen, when the world's falling apart, I mean, yeah, we care. We should be, you know, brokenhearted that people are going through the misery they are. But in one sense, our mission has not changed. We are still here to manifest the glory of God as we serve one another, loving Christ, loving one another, letting his glory shine. As the world gets darker, what does that mean? We shine brighter. You know, on the darkest night, you can see a candle from I forget how far it is, like 10 miles away. You

can see a candle. You can't do that if you're around here. You can't see a candle, you know, 10 feet away around here. There's so much light from the ground, right? But you and I are the temple. That's what he's saying. We are the place of his glory.

Why are you here? You're here to manifest his presence, his power. Now, how are you to do it? Third point. Who are you? You are a stone in the temple. Why are you here? To manifest the presence of God? Thirdly, how are you to do it? And there are two subpoints here on number 3 and the first subpoint is you are to treasure Christ supremely. This is how you manifest the presence of God in the world, how treasure Christ supremely. Where do we get that? Back to 1 Peter 2. Coming to him. First key word here, coming to him. Peter uses a phrase that is used often in the New Testament and in the Greek Old Testament, that is when the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic, but translated into Greek and so you find this same word often in the Old Testament, the Septuagint, the Greek version, and a number of times in the author of Hebrews. Coming to him has a cultic. I don't like to use that word because it sounds like occultic. But actually, cultic means related to worship. The cult is the place of worship. The occult is worship of wacko things. But it has the overtones of temple worship. It means to draw near to God. He uses a word "coming to Him" is the idea of coming into the presence of God. It's the verb itself has that force. As you're coming to him and the structure really is this way. It's a participle here in verse 4. I'm reading it translated as a participle. Coming to him and the idea is you are now being built up. It relates to the main verb, which is you are built up. You are being built up, verse 5. Coming to him, you are being built up.

So you're being built into a temple as you're coming to him and you're coming to him as you're coming into the presence of God. You realize that when your focus is on coming to Jesus, it's not something you do one time. The Christian life begins with coming to Jesus and the Christian life continues with coming to Jesus. Always going to Jesus. That's the Christian life. From A to Z, from the moment that you're born again until you go home, it's all about going to Jesus.

It says "coming to Him a living stone," and what's interesting here is, like I said, the structure, if you were just trying to follow what he's saying, he's basically saying the big picture of this letter at this point is remember I mentioned last time there's five commands that started in chapter 1 that ended with a command to long for the pure milk of the word. There was five commands that led to that and now if you do those five things, that is you set your hope on the coming of Christ, you be holy from chapter 1, verse 15; you live in fear, that is, you live Coram Deo in the presence of God, chapter 1, verse 17; you love each other earnestly, chapter 1, verse 22; you long for the milk of the word, chapter 2, verse 2. If you do these things, then you are through that coming to him. The focus of all of those things is not the doing of something, it is coming to Jesus. The reason that you're doing that is you're trying to connect more and more and more to Christ. The reason you love your brothers is to love Jesus. The reason that you fear God is to love Jesus. The reason that you separate from the world is that you can love Jesus more. The reason that you fix your hope on the Second Coming is so that you can love Jesus more. The reason that you seek to fill your mind with the milk of the word, that you long for the milk of the word, that is the logic of God, the way he thinks about things, you want to think the way God thinks so that you can love Jesus more.

That's what he's saying. That's the larger picture of what he's doing here. It's all about loving Jesus more. It's about treasuring him supremely, and what's interesting then is he does that now. He says, "This is what I'm doing. You're coming to Him and God's building you into a spiritual priesthood," but then he brings this contrast, verse 4, he kind of interrupts the flow of thought by saying this, "coming to Him as a living stone." He could have jumped right on ahead to say "you are being built up as living stones," but what does he do? He interjects a clause "which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God." He introduces this contrast between how the men of Jesus' day received him and how God sees him.

And he brings it back up again in verses 7 and 8. He spends a lot of time on it. That's part of the reason he brings those Old Testament verses up. Look at verse 7, "This precious value," this preciousness of Christ, this treasuring of Christ, "is for you who believe, but for those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." So there's two ways of seeing Jesus and it's all about how you see Jesus. This is the only question. This is the defining issue for every single human being that has ever been born: what do you say about Jesus? This is why it's so important to get to that issue when you're trying to bring someone from darkness to light. It's all about Christ.

It's really strong language. When that "has been rejected by men," you're coming to him as a living stone. He is also a living stone. You're a living stone being built on the living stone which is the foundation stone but the foundation stone, the cornerstone, was rejected by men. It was rejected by the builders, verse 7. That's where he quotes Psalm 118:22, "the stone which the builders rejected." That word "rejected" in verse 7 and "rejected" in verse 4, idea repeated, it's a strong word. It means "to test; to try; to examine carefully, thoughtfully; really look at it and then thrust it away." This is saying the Jewish leaders carefully looked at Jesus, they looked at his claims, they examined his teaching, they heard, they saw his miracles, they carefully examined him and they thrust him away.

And the world does that, don't they? Today, people look at Jesus and they thrust him away. In fact, John 1 makes the point that he came to his own and his own didn't receive him. The world was made through him. The world didn't recognize him. It's basically the norm for people to examine Jesus and thrust him away and say, "No, You are not a worthy cornerstone." When somebody doesn't do that, you know God's done a miracle in their life.

But the contrast is how man, how fallen men, how the Jewish leaders see Jesus and how God sees Jesus. Look at verse 4, who has been rejected by men but is choice and precious in the sight of God. God is the architect. God is the one who knows what he's building. He had the Jewish leaders supposed to be helping him out. They're like under-foremen. And the under-foremen look at the cornerstone and they say, "No, this cornerstone," they reject it and God says, "You guys don't know what you're talking about. This is the perfect cornerstone. There could not be a more perfect cornerstone. He is exactly what I need Him to be." God examined him and God's view is different and are you going to think like the world or are you going to think God's thoughts after him?

I love how the Scripture gives us some windows into how God feels about Jesus. I mean, the Old Testament anticipating him, how wonderful it's going to be to have the Messiah. But I love how you have a few times in the New Testament, three where God speaks out of heaven. God's voice is heard by human beings out of heaven. When? At the baptism of Jesus. Remember when Jesus is baptized, Jesus comes to John and says, "You need to baptize me." And John has already recognized Jesus, "You're the Messiah of God. I can't baptize You. You need to baptize me." Jesus said, "It is necessary to fulfill all righteousness. John, I know you're right about the fact I don't need to be baptized because baptism is about repentance. I don't need to repent in Myself. But you must understand I have come to identify with people who do need to repent. I've come to stand in their place and this is the first step in that process. I need to be baptized because it is necessary to fulfill all righteousness." So John obeys Jesus, baptizes him and what happens? A voice is heard out of heaven. The Holy Spirit comes down upon him as a dove and a voice is heard out of heaven and what does God say? "This is My Son whom I love, with whom I am well pleased. I'm so pleased with My Son."

And then like bookends of his ministry, the transfiguration, the Mount of Transfiguration. Remember Peter, James and John, they wake up and they see Jesus with Moses and Elijah talking. They knew it was Moses and Elijah. Moses and Elijah had been dead. There aren't any videos of Moses and Elijah, but God made them know that's Moses and that's Elijah. No doubt about it. And Peter says, "Lord, it's good for us to be here." He realizes he's seeing the Shekinah glory of God coming out from Christ and he's seeing Moses and Elijah standing there beside him and he's like, "We should be dead. Hey, it's good for us to be here. Lord, let us make tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, one for Elijah." Jesus doesn't answer him. Who does? The Father. He says, "This is My Son, with whom I'm well pleased. Listen to Him." Moses and Elijah take a back seat. "This is My Son. This is My chosen One. This is My choice and precious cornerstone. Focus on Him."

Now, before Jesus is crucified, just days before, Greeks come looking for Jesus and Jesus understands now the cross is right here before him and he prays out loud to the Father, "Father, glorify Thy name." And then God speaks out of heaven, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it." He's basically saying, "Listen, everything that you've been doing is exactly what you were supposed to do. You've done everything I wanted you to do and I'm going to keep doing it through you because you are exactly what I need you to be."

So Jesus is everything we need and the Scripture uses that, look at the adjectives. He says, choice and precious in the sight of God. Choice and precious. Chosen. Selected out from all options. He's the one. Precious means "of great value." In fact, the word "precious" occurs twice. It's also in verse 6, "Behold, I lay in Zion," and choice as well, "a choice stone, a precious corner stone." Both of those words repeated twice. Chosen. Precious.

The corner stone. The corner stone was the most valuable stone in construction. It had to be perfect. The corner had to be exactly right, set exactly in line so that the corner of the

building would be lined up with the other corner of the building. The foundation, everything would rest on this stone. It has to be perfect. God says Jesus is perfect.

The living stone. He's a living stone. That is, he's a resurrected Lord. And the reason that you and I are living stones is because he lives. When he says you're a living stone, it means you have resurrection life in you right now if you belong to Christ. You have been made to share an eternal life. It has come into you now, not physically, but spiritually. You die and you won't die. You'll die physically but you won't die spiritually and it's because Jesus is a living stone.

So you trust, you treasure him supremely and, secondly, you trust him completely. He makes the point that, "I'm laying in Zion a choice stone, a precious stone." You're being built upon this stone. He says, "he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." The idea is, remember I was talking earlier about the context of verse 6, Isaiah 28:14. There's all kinds of chaos in the culture. God lays down a choice cornerstone and says, "Build on Him. Believe on Him. Trust on Him, and you will not be disappointed. Trust in everything that He is, and you will be able to stand up to everything God calls you to do."

He's saying the way that we build, we come to Jesus, we read the word, we fellowship with believers, we love one another, and it's all about loving Jesus more and this is what we should be helping each other to do. I mean, how do you build the temple? You try to love Jesus more every day, and you try to help other believers love Jesus more every day. Whatever their circumstance, you try to help them love Jesus. I mean, you meet with them when they're hurting, you listen to them, sometimes you just sit there quietly beside them, mourn with those who mourn, but your goal at the end of the day is, "Jesus is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. Look at Jesus. He's with you." And when you're doing that, you're building the temple. You're making the glory of God come down and be manifest.

So that's the part of treasuring him supremely. You want to help each other do that. Now, trust him completely. That is, depend upon his work for everything that you need to do. Depend upon the power of Christ, his cross, his resurrection. That's the only power that you have to do what he's called you to do. So God calls you to be, you know, to overcome anger. How do you do that? Well, you have to do it through the power of Christ. You've got to learn to, because of your union with Jesus, you can die to sinful anger, and you can replace that with his meekness. You can replace that with his gentleness. You can learn. And so you actively, even though you fill your mind with Scripture, you're learning, "A gentle answer turns away wrath. Stop my mouth before I say something. It just comes out. Stop that." But you're also, "Lord Jesus, help me." In the moment, you're saying, "Lord Jesus, help me. Give me Your meekness. Give me Your gentleness. Thank You that in Your death, my old man died. The anger that wants to come out of me is the old man. You put it to death. I'm no longer a slave to that because of Your death was my death, and Your resurrection is my resurrection, and Your life can come through me." Galatians 2.20, "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me. In the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God." You're trusting in everything that Jesus is, his provision. And we're doing that, and we're helping one another to do that. What's happening? We're building

the temple. If you're treasuring Christ more and you're trusting in Christ more, you are building the temple. What's happening? The glory is coming down more and more and more. We can't see it with our eyes, but other people will have their eyes open to it spiritually.

This is God's plan for today, for you and me to build his house. We're to be at work and it's as simple as this: every day let's try to love Jesus more, and every day let's try to depend on Jesus more. And if we do that, we will see his glory more and more and more.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, how grateful we are for the grace that we have in Christ. Thank You for a Savior that is so wonderful. Lord, the world despises Him, but it's because they're blind. Thank You for opening our eyes to see His beauty and His glory. And for those that are here today that have not yet had their eyes open, open their eyes, Lord. Let them see what a wonderful Savior Jesus is, how gracious and kind He is. To those who repent and turn back to Him, he always says, "Come." But to those who will not repent, He will judge. Lord, help us love Him more and help us depend on Him more every day so that You can make Your glory known in our lives in a fuller and more wonderful way. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*