

# 1 P E T E R

## A VERSE BY VERSE STUDY THROUGH PETER'S EPISTLE

### **SESSION OBJECTIVE: 1 PETER 2:4-8**

To understand how our spiritual choices reflect our standing with God.

## **One Man's Trash is God's Treasure**

It's a famous saying, one that you have likely heard before - "One man's trash is another man's treasure." It usually is found in context of someone discarding an item that no longer holds value for them, only to be picked up in jubilation by another person who finds a great deal of value in that same item. It's hard to track down where the saying first originated. Some trace it back to the 1920's, and others to sources in the 19th century. However, it is fashioned after a great deal of other sayings that are similar. The one that goes back the farthest is likely: "One man's meat is another man's poison." It is, in a different way, saying the same thing. It conveys the idea that an object can bring a great deal of joy to one person, and a lack of interest to another. The proverb in this form is found all the way back in 1576 in the autobiography of the English composer, Thomas Whythorne. However, it was likely borrowed from the Roman poet and philosopher, Lucretius (94-55 BC), who expressed something similar: "Ut quod ali cibus est aliis fuat acre venenum," which translates roughly as, "That which to some is food, to others is rank poison." Words and expressions are fun, and have a kind of power that last for centuries, if not millennia.

In 1 Peter 2:4, Peter writes about how we approach our Lord who died in our place for our sin: "As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious." We are rejected by men, but chosen by God. We are detested by men, but seen as precious in the sight of God. Truly, one man's trash is God's treasure.

## The Living Stone

Verse 4 begins with, “As you come to him,” which raises the question: “Who is him?” Peter is referencing back to “the Lord,” who is called, “good” in verse 3. This is a reference to Psalm 34:8: “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!” Here, take note that LORD is capitalized, which indicates this is Yahweh being spoken of. Peter’s connection of Jesus to Yahweh is another indication of the deity of Christ.

Peter calls Jesus, “the living stone,” which is another clear reference to the Old Testament, and one that Peter will spell out in verse 6. The stone reference is to Psalm 118:22: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” Notice, Peter doesn’t just call Jesus a stone, but a *living* stone. Jesus as the stone becomes the cornerstone by being rejected by the builders. The builders are a reference to the unbelieving Jews who crucified Jesus. Through the crucifixion and His subsequent resurrection, Jesus is not just any stone - He is the living stone.

### **A FAMILIAR PASSAGE**

This passage out of Psalm 118 is an important verse. Peter not only uses it here, but he also argued with it in Acts 4. In Acts 3, Peter and John had been preaching in the so-called Portico of Solomon (Acts 3:11), and were arrested by the Sadducees for it (Acts 4:1). After being brought before the, “rulers and elders and scribes,” as well as the high priest (Acts 4:5-6), Peter spoke by the power of the Holy Spirit:

*“Rulers and elders of the people, 9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, 10 let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead — by this name this man stands here before you in good health. 11 ‘He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone.’ 12 And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”*

Peter’s interaction with Psalm 118:22 makes the connection between the Jews and the builders and Christ and the stone. It is because Jesus is living that there is no other name under heaven that can save. The resurrection demonstrates the power of God for salvation to any who believe (Rom. 1:16).

### **THE PARABLE OF THE TENANTS**

Another example is found in Jesus’ parable of the tenants in Matthew 21:33-46. Jesus tells a parable in which a landowner rents out his vineyard to some vine-growers and goes on a journey. When harvest time came, he sent slaves out to collect the spoils, but the vine-growers beat one slave, killed another, and stoned a third. He did the same with a larger group of slaves a second time, and the same result followed. Then the landowner thought, “I’ll send my son, they won’t harm him,” but alas they murdered the son as well in order to try and take the inheritance.

In the parable, the landowner is the Father, and the vine-growers represent the Jews. The first slaves are prophets, and the Son is Jesus. They reject the Son, the chief cornerstone. Jesus makes this connection as well, also quoting Psalm 118:22.

The significance of Jesus as the living stone cannot be overstated. Jesus is central to all of redemptive history. You cannot build a structure without the cornerstone, or the structure will fail, and God’s structure that He is building is the church. Paul says in Ephesians 2:19-20: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,

*but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.*"

## The Living Stones

As born-again followers of Jesus, we too are living stones. We await our resurrection promised to us since we identify in His resurrection (Rom. 6:5; 1 Cor. 6:14; 1 Thess. 4:16). Even still, we are granted new life and thus could be called living stones in light of that as well (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:4-5). He says we are being built up as a, "spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2:5). This house is the aforementioned, "God's household" in Ephesians 2:19, built on the apostles and prophets, with Christ as the cornerstone. Peter refers to us as a, "holy priesthood." More will be said about this term and the parallel, "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9) in Session 10. For now, it should be sufficient to note that believers are being built into a structure, "God's household," to function collectively as a priesthood of sorts, that offers, "spiritual sacrifices." These sacrifices could be understood as a commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel to the nations (Rom. 12:1), as well as a public praising of God (Heb. 13:15-16).

Those who reject the cornerstone, on the contrary, are not living stones, nor can they be seen as elect in the sight of God. Peter says plainly, "They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do." Be careful to not apply a kind of "double-predestination" here. God does not predestine some to disobedience in an active sense; He does not need to. Sin is what separates us from God and thus from birth we are on a track of damnation. We do not need God's help in our journey towards hell. If there are those who reject Him as, "the rock of stumbling, a stone of offense" (1 Pet. 2:8; Is. 8:14), they are destined to do so only because they are not the elect of God. Predestination does not biblically work both ways. A person is either predestined for God's family (a life driven by God through His Holy Spirit), or they are not (a life driven by man).

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read 1 Peter 2:4. Who is the living stone in reference to?

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2. Read 1 Peter 2:4. What does it mean that Jesus as, "rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious?" According to the notes, what other passages utilize this Old Testament reference?

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### Day Two

1. Read 1 Peter 2:5. Who are the living stones in reference to?

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2. Read 1 Peter 2:5. What is the spiritual house a reference to? (Hint: See Ephesians 2:19)

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### Day Three

1. Read 1 Peter 2:6. What Old Testament passage is Peter quoting here? Write it down below.

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2. Read 1 Peter 2:7. What Old Testament passage is Peter quoting here? Write it down below.

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### Day Four

1. Read 1 Peter 2:8. What Old Testament passage is Peter quoting here? Write it down below.

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2. Read 1 Peter 2:8. What does it mean that the disobedient were destined to stumble? (Hint: See above notes)

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## Week 9 Discussion: A Spiritual House

Peter contends in chapter 2 that individuals who come to faith in Christ are being built up collectively into a, “spiritual house.” Paul calls it, “the household of God” (Eph. 2:19). These are references to the church. The church is what God is building, and its function is to offer spiritual sacrifices of evangelism and worship. In other words, the church is meant to do more than simply meet up and hang out - we are to make a mark on the world we exist in. Talk as a group about how your view of church is similar to and/or different than what is being described here, and how you can change what you think to realign yourself to the text.

1. Icebreaker: How important is church to you? In a set of priorities, where does it rank?
2. Do you view your Christian experience as primarily *individual* or *collectively* (with other believers)?
3. When Peter says in 1 Peter 2:5, “you yourselves like living stones,” he is speaking in the plural. In other words, he is saying, “Y’all.” What does that say about how Peter views the Christian experience? (Note: Paul does this too. *You* is overwhelmingly plural in the original language.)
4. Why do you think a lot of people are more individualistic about their faith? Is this good or bad? Why?
5. How can you include other believers in other parts of your life? Would it benefit you? Why?
6. When was the last time you invited someone to church? What is preventing you?

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus is the living stone because He has risen from the dead after being rejected by the Jews and crucified.
2. Those who follow Him by faith are living stones because we too will be raised from the dead one day.

### PRAYER REQUESTS: