

# THE LIVING STONE

1 Peter 2:4-25  
Key Verse: 2:4

**“As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him.”**

In chapter 1 we learned that we have a living hope of the kingdom of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We also learned that Christians are holy pilgrims in this world. They have a living hope and are holy pilgrims. Peter understood that the scattered believers were still immature. So in chapter 2, Peter teaches them who Jesus really is and how they can win the victory in this world as Christians.

**First, the living Stone (4).** Read verse 4. "As you come to him, the living Stone rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him...." The living Stone is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the living Stone. This has a historical background. When we study the Bible as a whole, the first thing that captures our minds to see God's purpose is God's world salvation plan. God had a precise plan to train his people Israel in the smelting furnace of Egypt until his people grew up to be a nation. After that, God gave them wilderness training to raise them as humble and lowly shepherds for God's flock all over the world. Exodus 19:4-6 summarizes God's plan excellently. God wanted to make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. In short, God wanted to make his people a shepherd nation as well as a godly nation. Even though his people had been slaves in Egypt 430 years and were deeply embedded in slave mentalities, God's hope for his people was glorious.

Why did God give them wilderness training? It was to lay the foundation of world salvation work. After wilderness training, God led them to the promised land. According to God's plan, his people had to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They had to be shepherds and shepherdesses to plant the knowledge of God in the hearts of pagan people in the promised land. But they could not maintain God's blessing. When they began to enjoy little comforts and little conveniences of civilized Canaan and they began to enjoy flowing milk and honey, they gradually melted into the easygoing life of the Canaanites. As a result, they abandoned God and their holy mission.

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There is the parable of the tenants in Matthew 21:33-44. This parable explains how God's world salvation plan was frustrated. God, in his great wisdom, planted a vineyard, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. The tenants seized his servants. They beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Finally, the owner of the vineyard sent his son, believing that they would treat him well. But the tenants killed the owner's son and threw him away. This parable refers to God's people Israel. They were chosen and they were given a mission. But they disobeyed. This parable tells us how God's people, who were supposed to be the foundation of the world salvation plan, crumbled. This parable also tells us that God could not use Israel to lay the big foundation of world salvation. Instead, God chose one living Stone through which God wanted to fulfill his world salvation purpose.

Who is the living Stone? The living Stone is the rejected Stone. Look at verse 7. Peter quotes Psalm 118:22,23. It says, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes." This story is repeated in Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10, and Luke 20:17. This repetition warns us that we should not reject the living Stone, as the Jews rejected Jesus, simply because he did not fit into their own blueprint for their worldly plan of construction. They rejected Jesus because their way of salvation and their way of eternal life did not match with Jesus. His people's rejection of the living Stone was the invitation to their self-destruction. The kingdom of God will be taken away from them.

Luke 20:18 says, "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." Not only the Jews, but also worldly people think they can reject God at random. It is sheer ignorance which invites self-destruction. First they are crushed in their inner man. But that is not all. An even more tragic thing is that they would be put into eternal condemnation. They said, "God is love, so he does not send anybody to hell." But the Bible says they would suffer in the fiery lake of burning sulfur, which never ceases. The most unbearable suffering to the unbelieving is that they have to live only among the evil men. It is a universal truth that everybody likes to look at lovely children and beautiful women and honest men.

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Even a wretched man does not like to associate with another wretched man. But these unbelieving people have to live with the ungodly, who are unpredictable. The unbelieving have to live with liars and murderers. What is more, they have to live with those who invent all the evildoing. They have to live with those who suppress the truth of God. To live among evil men would be the most unbearable punishment. Their eternal condemnation is not temporary. It is everlasting condemnation. This is the reason we must not reject Jesus, the living Stone.

The living Stone is also our cornerstone of salvation. Isaiah 28:16 says, "So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.'" The living Stone is the rock of salvation. The living Stone is the foundation of God's world salvation purpose.

The living Stone is the Sovereign Ruler of the world. Daniel 2 is the story about Nebuchadnezzar's dominion of world history. Nations of the world are likened to gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay. They would be broken to pieces, and at the same time become like chaff on a threshing floor in the summertime. The wind would sweep them away without leaving a trace. It is an allegory of the dominion of world history that King Nebuchadnezzar should know. But there is a rock which was not cut out by human hands. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever (Da 2:44). God sent his Son Jesus to fulfill his world salvation purpose. He was the living Stone, but rejected by men. Finally he died on the cross. But God did not abandon him. God raised him from the dead on the third day and made him King of kings and Lord of lords and the Sovereign Ruler of history.

**Second, a spiritual house (4-8).** Look at verse 5. "...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." Peter admonishes God's flock of sheep that they should be like Jesus. They also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be holy priests. What does "spiritual house" mean? A spiritual house is likened to a Christian. According to Peter, Christians must imitate Jesus, the living Stone. Christians should not

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be afraid of rejection and slander and persecution from enemies of God. Christians should be a community, being built in the name of Jesus. Christians are individual persons. Of course, one must have his own life. And at the same time, he should be a part of the body of Jesus Christ.

A spiritual community makes the difference between Christians and worldly people. Of course, in a suburb, worldly people have a community. But it is for the sake of the safety of their garages and lawn mowers. But the Christian community is to build up the body of Christ. Therefore, one Christian is like a brick to a building. And at the same time, one Christian is like a whole building. Ephesians 2:14-16 says, "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility." Christian community destroys the dividing wall of hostility through the blood of Christ. Christian community is a unit. Christian unity is like a body. Though it is made out of many parts, and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. Therefore if one part suffers, everybody suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices (1 Co 12:1-26). A Christian community is a family. There is one Father, Jesus, and we are all everlasting brothers and sisters.

The word "community" is so good, so there are more than 3,000 community colleges in the United States. But without the spirit of community, community is nothing. Even a little child has a sense of community. There was a young woman whose son was one year old. This child made a big smile whenever so many UBF members were bustling in his small rented room. On the other hand, when his grandmother from his mother's side came into his room, he began to cry at the top of his lungs and never stopped until his grandmother went away. I don't know how this little boy discerned between Bible-believing people and the unbelieving grandmother. Because he cried whenever his grandmother came, she has held a grudge against the little child for the last 19 years. When the boy was accepted to Harvard, this grandmother should have given him a scholarship. But, to get even, she refused to give him a scholarship. All people are precious. But those who have fear of God

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are very precious. We must love fellow Christians deeply from the heart and meet the need of needy brothers and sisters.

These days unemployment is very serious. Those who have earned Ph.D.s scarcely have job opportunities. One day a handsome-looking young man was emitting a bad odor in the center. Someone asked, "What is your job?" He said, "I am working in the government." Later, we found that he was one of the public aid recipients. There are too many public aid recipients. But the most serious problem is there is no sense of community. Many a person is poisoned by his selfishness. We, the children of God, must know that we are a community.

**Third, a royal priesthood (9-12).** Look at verse 9. "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." Here the words, "chosen people" mean a lot. Mr. Clinton is chosen as President of the United States to defend this nation, to enhance the moral standard, to uphold educational endeavor, not to abuse the law but to keep the spirit of the law. He is also chosen to advance the economic situation. But we Christians are chosen by God, not by vote, but by divine choice. We did not choose God, but God chose us and appointed us to bear much fruit (Jn 15:16). According to verse 9, God chose us to shepherd the flock of God of the whole world: the American flock of God and the Russian flock of God and the whole world. God chose us to teach them the Bible so that they may not perish but have eternal life. God chose us to teach them the word of God so that they may live according to God's law. God chose us to raise his children to be holy, as God is holy. God chose us to win them over to God so that they shall not perish but have eternal life.

Most importantly, God chose us to advertise the precious name of Jesus. In the past, we were in the darkness of sin. In our ignorance we tried to find a kind of joy in the world. As a result, we piled up the wrath of God. In the darkness of sin we damaged others' lives in order to gratify our sinful desires. When we were in the darkness of sin, we were afraid of losing a life of sin because we thought that if we don't commit sin we would have no fun. We were spiritually blind. We did not know that there is a heavenly joy in Jesus through rebirth by the precious blood of Jesus. In short, by the grace of God, we came out of

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the darkness of sin into the wonderful light of Jesus. Now each of us can love his wife and his kids and the flock of God's sheep and pray for them. God's grace through his Son Jesus Christ is so marvelous that we cannot ignore it. We must advertise his marvelous grace that he called us out of darkness into his wonderful light as our first priority.

This seems to be a very small matter. But when we have a clear experience of new birth and advertise the marvelous grace of Jesus, then the course of the world will change little by little. Why do we do this? It is because in the past we were the children of the devil. We were not the people of God. But now we are the people of God (10). In the past we were not worthy of God's grace. But through his Son Jesus Christ, we received mercy through his precious blood. Why do we do this? Look at verse 12b. "...they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." We advertise the marvelous grace of Jesus. We live the way God wants us to live so that the pagan people may glorify God.

We are chosen to advertise the name of Jesus who brought us from darkness to the wonderful light. We advertise the name of Jesus so that they can see the light of Jesus and come to God in order to be saved. This is a part of participating in God's world salvation purpose.

There was a high school senior. By day he was a straight A student. By night, he was a heavy metal guitarist. He was sincere. But he did not study the Bible and he did not know Jesus personally. So he was groping in the darkness of sin. But through Bible study he met Jesus personally. Since then he began to advertise the name of Jesus, not with his mouth, but with his life of faith. He overcame the peer pressure of Harvard University, which was either famous or notorious. At the age of 28 he became a professor at Penn State University and married a beautiful and artistic woman. As she is beautiful, so she is delicate and nagging. But the young professor takes care of her so well that all the neighbors envy the family. In this way, one young boy became an advertiser of Jesus Christ. We must remember that God chose us and appointed us to bear much fruit. We must remember that God chose us to advertise his wonderful name.

**Fourth, submission for the sake of good influence (13-25).** Look at

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verse 13. "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority..." They say that in Peter's times there were 160,000 slaves under Roman rule. Most slaves were war prisoners. Prisoners were the possession of their owners. They had no human rights. They had no right to marry. If children were born to slaves, they became the owner's possessions. But there were all kinds of slaves: writers, musicians, architects, cleaners, wagon drivers and so on. At that time, Christians were categorized as slaves. It was not easy for Christians, who have the kingdom of God in their hearts, to serve pagan masters. But Peter did not encourage slaves to revolt against their masters. Peter encourages them to submit themselves for the Lord's sake. It is because freedom is more precious than a better situation. So Peter says in verse 16, "Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God." Man has to live in the world. There is always a situation he cannot fit into or cannot like. There is no one in history who did not complain about his personal situation. But there is one. He was Albert Schweitzer. He was in Lambar<sup>n</sup>, Gabon, in Africa. He was confined in a medical clinic of an African desert. But he once said, "I am indeed free because I can freely serve God. I can freely help the needy. In addition, I can freely think limitlessly." His situation was so bad that he lost two of his family members. But he did not complain about the situation. Rather, he enjoyed freedom in Jesus. This is what Peter encourages the flock of God under his care to do.

Look at verse 18. "Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh." Here, "slaves" obviously means the flock of God. Peter encourages them to submit both to those who were good and those who were bad. It is because when they suffer they are conscious of God. They can deepen the grace of Jesus they had received and they can come to know the mysterious love of God (19). Peter encourages them that it is good to submit to both good and bad masters because they can experience the suffering of Jesus and follow the footsteps of Jesus.

These days people think they would rather die than to be submissive. As human beings, in one sense, what they think is reasonable. But look up at Jesus. Verse 22 says, "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." He was not only submissive, he was insulted,

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threatened, wounded, and crucified in order to take care of God's flock of sheep. But Jesus did not open his mouth because of what they were doing to him. Here we learn from Jesus that Jesus was the Son of God. He was from heaven. In short, he was a spiritual man. Jesus did what God wanted him to do. In short, Jesus submitted himself to the will of God to die on the cross for the sin of the world. So all other things could not be a problem to him at all.

There are two pastors in a country. One is in his 60's and the other is in his 90's. The younger one has a half-million church members. He is very famous. The older person is now too old to do anything. So he is sitting in his house on the slope of a mountain and praying. But he began his ministry as an orphanage worker. He contracted T.B. from an orphan and had one lung removed by an operation. All his lifetime he never criticized or felt bitter toward others. He was always silent and prayerful. As a result, he received the Templeton award, together with Billy Graham and Mother Theresa. His church members are not so many. But his influence is very great. At this Peter encourages the flock of God. In that difficult situation Peter wanted them to be men and women of encouragement. Christianity is the religion of influence.

Of course, Jesus came to this world to save men from their sins. For this, he obeyed God's will for the world salvation unto death, death on the cross. Because of Jesus' obedience to the Father, even the secular people give Jesus first place among the saints. Do you know why people give Jesus first place among the saints? It is because of the influence of Jesus. The influence of Jesus came from God. Whatever he did, he prayed to God and listened to God and practiced what he should do. Jesus loved God and loved God's children more than his life. To the present and in the future, there will be no such good example which influenced man to love him. The lifegiving power of Jesus is more than just what he said, it is his influence through practice.

Today we studied who Jesus is. Jesus is the living Stone. Even God's chosen people failed to be a foundation of the world salvation plan. Jesus became the living Stone. A stone is too small for the foundation of world salvation work. But because of his obedience, one small living Stone became greater than the large foundation of world salvation work. We also learn that Christians must rule and overrule the situation and give victory to God. Christians must follow the footsteps of Jesus,

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especially in Jesus' influence. May God richly bless you.