

Identity and Mission

There was a time I had a conversation with a universalist pastor. He was determined to convince me that everyone was saved and we just needed to tell them. Then I asked him about repentance and quoted a Scripture. All he could reply was “*Ah... repentance...*”

The most difficult thing for a new believer is leaving the ‘old self’ behind.

The battle is between living as who we truly are - children of God – and not living how we used to be – as citizens of this world.

- 1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,
- 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,
- 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. (1 Peter 2:1-3)

I. Maturing a Believer

Peter says that newborns grow as they eat. They must also leave behind impure attitudes and behaviors as they take in the pure Word of God

Building up to this understanding Peter has written,
(1 Pet. 1:14) As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance... but be holy.”

1:23 “...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.”

The New Living Translation presents the idea that healthy growth requires the removal of spiritual toxins that hinder growth.

So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech.

The primary verb in our verses in 1 Peter 2:1-3 is, “long for the pure milk”, supported by the phrase “rid yourself” (participle) “putting aside”

New Christians are to put aside evil behavior, evil attitudes, and evil speaking.

Instead of *malice* and anger we forgive all who sin against us.
 Instead of *deception* we tell the truth in love.
 Instead of *hypocrisy* we live transparent lives.
 Instead of *jealousy* we serve others in love.
 Instead of unkind or *evil speaking*, we speak blessing,
 rejoicing even in trials and suffering.

The key to growth as new believers is to long for the pure word of God.

Would you describe your attitude towards the word of God as a craving?

Process: Salvation – sanctification – transformation

The result of God's word taken into our hearts is Christlike love for others.

“Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart...”
 (1:22)

The first key to growth is to take in truth through the Word of God.

The second key to spiritual growth is living out that truth in the church.

II. Building Believer's – some assembly required...

Peter uses a word picture connecting individual saints to Christ's church.

As Living Stones

- 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.

We understand that Christ has always been the Rock.
 He renamed Cephas to Peter or petros “little Rock or stone”
 Then Jesus said,

“And upon this Rock – ‘Petra’ (great rock) I will build My church.
 Here, in Peter’s letter he calls Jesus the Living Stone and believers, living stones,
 that are being built into a **stone house**.

The word-picture is of a structure like Solomon’s Temple in which the holy priests
 ministered to the Lord with holy sacrifices and offerings.

Saints in Christ’s stone house offer up spiritual sacrifices, as priests of Christ.

What does Christ’s church look like when believers are ‘AWOL’?

Full lot of holes...

Jesus is in the church-building business.

He grows individual whom He builds into His church.

One individual can only do so much.

Several growing healthy Christians can do much more.

Every musician should have a solo act. But how much better to add a few
 good players and form a band. The sound is so much fuller; with more variety, and
 so much more fun for those who play and for those who listen.

It’s wonderful to have a star on a sports team. But without the team the star
 would lose every game. So a church is so much greater as the members
 individually grow and then work together in participation and function to build
 itself up in love. What does a church do? It prays, worships, learns and grows-
 things we do as individuals, and do better together.

There’s a lesson in 1 John

“What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too
 may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the
 Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so
 that our joy may be made complete.” (1:3-4)

Only as a church can we enjoy fellowship and corporate joys.
 When someone comes to Christ the joy will spread to everyone.
 Just as a newborn coming into a family brings joy to whole family.

The Contrast of believers and unbelievers

Peter presents a great contrast between those who are believers and unbelievers. The picture of Christ as the *Stone which the builders rejected* refers to a stone that was delivered to the builders of the Temple of Solomon's day. A particular stone was set aside and misplaced because it didn't seem to fit anywhere.

At the end of the project, however, a vital stone – chief corner stone – was missing and re-ordered. The stone quarry wrote back that it had already been shipped and received. To everyone's surprise it was the stone that the builders had rejected earlier and set aside. This became a biblical illustration of Christ who was believed by some and rejected by others.

Jesus the Cornerstone – the top stone in a building, or the keystone in an arch.
 Everything is dependent upon it!

Jesus: The Stumbling Block

Those who believe in Jesus see Him as a precious stone.

Peter says of them,

AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

Unbelievers are those who reject Christ:

“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.”

The classic story of Cinderella is where the mistreated stepdaughter becomes a princess. Every child has seen this story a hundred times and every young girl has worn a Cinderella dress and imagined herself walking down the beautiful stairway stopping the show with her great beauty; the eyes of the prince focused on her face.

But the other side of the story was about two step-sisters who did not end well.

The other side of the story is of those who reject Christ:

- Disobedience and Doom

Paul wrote that He proclaimed Jesus Christ crucified...

“...a stumbling block to Jews, and foolishness to Greeks.”

(1 Cor. 1:22-23)

The Jews wanted to build God’s house” according to their own foundation.
They rejected Jesus, God’s chosen cornerstone.

The Greeks of the first century sought salvation through wisdom and rejected the idea of a ‘god’ who died. So they rejected Christ as well.

The apostles proclaimed,

“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.” (Acts 4:12)

Jesus spoke of Himself,

“I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6).

Why do people reject Christ? Because they are disobedient.

What happens when people reject Christ?

Peter writes, “...and to this *doom* they were also appointed.”

Those who come to Jesus by faith will be vindicated and honored.

Those who reject Him in unbelief will be put to shame at the final judgment.

Imagine that great day. Every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:11).

Some will bow to Christ as Judge; Others to Christ as Savior.

Just imagine what Christ’s church can be when the members follow Christ fully, prioritizing His church, allowing Him to live in and through them on this earth.