

## Session 3

June 21, 2020

### THE TESTIMONY OF OUR HOPE

#### 1 Peter 2:4-15

The Bible uses several metaphors to describe the relationship that the Lord Jesus has with His church. For instance, in 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Revelation, Christ is depicted as the *bridegroom* and the church is called His *bride*. In 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians, Christ is the *head* and the church is His *body*. Peter, however, suggests that Christ is the *cornerstone*, and the church is made of *living stones*. This is particularly interesting, in that the name Peter itself means “rock” (see Matt. 16:18). The text this week reminds us of what Christ has done for us, and what we must do for Christ.

**Christ and those redeemed (vv. 4-6; 9-10).** The main idea in these verses is what I call the *chosen-ness* of God’s people. Once again, Peter has couched this truth in colorful terms with distinct doctrinal significance. Notice the adjectives he employs in verse 5: First, we are *living stones*. There is nothing organic about stones. They are depicted as hard, cold, and absolutely lifeless. The Old Testament law (that no one could keep) was appropriately carved into *tablets of stone* (see 2 Cor. 3:3); the lost are said to have *hearts of stone* (Ez. 11:19); and dead bodies were placed in *graves of stone* (Mk 15:46). Even the dry bones of Ezekiel 37 had once been alive! But Peter reminds us that even the lifeless can be brought to life in Christ. Second, these living stones are not to be scattered about but rather brought together, collectively forming a spiritual habitation for God (see 2 Cor. 6:16). Third, the living church is now the habitat of the priesthood. The Old Testament restrictions were lifted at the tearing of the veil, and full access was given to all who are willing to enter (see also Is. 61:6). Finally, the offerings we bring are not physical rituals but spiritual exercises; the kind that are acceptable to God (see Rom. 12:1). This new reality was not a surprise, as both the headship of Christ and His relationship with the people of God was prophesied in the Old Testament (see Ps. 118:22; Is. 28:16, et al.). While we should be very careful applying to the New Testament church Old Testament promises made to Israel, here, Peter does it for us in verse 9, projecting the promises God made to His people in Exodus 19 directly to His people in the New Testament church. It should be noted however, that the purpose of this promise is projected to us as well. Just as the glorious deliverance of Israel was an act of His mercy, so is our deliverance from sin. This was to be the proclamation of God’s people then and should be the proclamation of His people today (vv. 9-10).

**Christ and those who reject (vv. 7-8).** We all know that “life is full of decisions.” That means that life is also full of the consequences that come because of those decisions! In classic biblical fashion, Peter speaks of the *chosen-ness* of man in one breath and the responsibility of our choosing God in the next. The same sun that melts wax hardens clay. Similarly, the same stone that sets the foundation of the church for those who accept Him becomes a stumbling block for those who reject Him. Christ and His cross are offensive to men (see 1 Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 5:11). They signify the offensive price of both humanity’s sinfulness and God’s gift of salvation. Those who reject the gracious gift of redemption will face His awful wrath. In their disobedience, they stumble into His judgement. This too, is part of God’s sovereign plan (v. 8).

**Christ-followers and responsibility (vv. 11-15).** As always, chosen-ness does not negate responsibility. In fact, those who are in Christ now have the added responsibility of living like it. The expectations Peter gives are laid out in simple commands. In verse 11: *abstain from fleshly desires*. In verse 12: *conduct yourselves honorably*. In verse 13: *submit to authority*. These three commands are sandwiched between two reasons. First, Peter reminds us that they we are temporary residents of planet earth. Time is limited; we are only passing through (see Eph. 5:16). Second, God uses our doing good to silence our (and His) critics (v. 15). For these reasons, our chosen status requires a lifestyle that reflects the one who chose us.