

**Letters From a Fisherman**  
**Week 8**  
**1 Peter 2:1-5**  
**“Living Stones”**

**Introduction**

**To Him Who loves us and has set us free from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**  
**Revelation 1:5b-6**

There is an unfortunate chapter break between *1 Peter Chapter 1* and *Chapter 2*, for there is a continuous thought being conveyed between these passages. Peter begins this line of reasoning with the declaration that those who are in Christ must strive to live a life of holiness (**1 Peter 1:13**). He continues by describing just how Christians are to behave towards one another, namely in both brotherly and agape love. His reasoning for this is because we have all been born-again into the same family. This new birth occurs when The Spirit reveals to us the truth of God’s Word and we believe. And as a result, we have a new nature. And that which is rooted in The Word of God is by its very nature immutable. We cannot go back to what we were, for The Word has forever transformed us.

*Chapter 2* continues this thought with the word “*therefore*”, with the implication that since we have been transformed by The Word, then it stands to reason that our old nature is no longer of any real value to us. Subsequently, it must be done away with. To live according to our old fleshly desires is in contradiction with what we have become. As one famous preacher has described it, “*You cannot stay where you are and go with God.*”

The way that Peter outlines his case for Christian living in this epistle is quite impressive. As we have noticed earlier, he makes his points in continual succession, each one building upon the previous one, until he has constructed a “*house*” of reasoning as it were. In *Chapter 2*, he actually likens The Church to a great temple being built upon Christ Himself, its foundation stone. The imagery is both beautiful and inspiring.

So to summarize Peter’s line of thought, we are to love one another, because we have been reborn in Christ by The Spirit and The Word. We are to lay aside our former way of living along with its accompanying inner attitudes. Because we are born-again into new life. And we are to immerse ourselves in God’s Word so that we may continue to be sanctified, remade into the image of the One Who died to redeem us. In these things, we will be “built up” to become all that God has intended us to be.

So in essence, as a born-again Believers, we are: **1) In the same family (1:23); 2) Craving and requiring the same nourishment (2:2); 3) Part of the same holy temple (2:4-5); 4) Having the same calling (2:5b); 5) Offering up the same sacrifices (2:5c); 6) And of the same race or kingdom (2:10).** Therefore, is it any wonder that Christ prayed for us this prayer, before He went to the cross:

**“May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us, so that the world may believe You sent Me. I have given them the glory You have given Me, so that they may be one as We are one. I am in them and You are in Me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me.”**  
**John 17:21-23**

So, as we look together to this wonderful passage of Scripture, let us examine our own hearts to discover if we are truly becoming “one”, both with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and with our LORD, Who has redeemed us from the bondage of our former lives. For God has saved us not only for eternal life when Christ calls us home, but He has saved us to a greater way of life as we sojourn through this sinful world.

The only way that we can achieve this uniformity in Christ is clearly laid out for us in The Scriptures. We must become a people of The Word, allowing God to transform our innermost attitudes by the cleansing power of The Scriptures working within us. It is only by this that the world can see Christ in us and come to believe that He was indeed sent by The Father to redeem fallen mankind. So let us dedicate ourselves with becoming all that He intends for us by *Taking Off* the old ways, *Taking In* The Word, and *Taking Our Place* within the holy temple of God. Please allow me to explain.

### **Take Off (vs. 1)**

**Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander.**

**1 Peter 2:1**

The word that Paul used, translated “rid yourselves” in the CSB is *apotithemi* (pronounced ap-ot-eeth’-ay-mee). This is a word primarily used in regards to taking off a garment. It is the same word used in *Acts Chapter 7*, when the men “*laid aside*” (**Acts 7:58**) their clothes at the feet of Saul when Stephen was stoned to death. In this context, Peter is admonishing the suffering church to cast off, as it were, the filthy garments of their old nature, for they have been washed clean and born again in Christ Jesus.

As one commentator has described it, it is like discarding the grave clothes that we wore when we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Do you remember the story of Lazarus? When Christ shouted the command that Lazarus come forth from the grave, the decomposing corpse of His friend was raised from death to life. As he came out of his tomb Jesus commanded that his grave clothes be removed from his body. Can you imagine Lazarus saying, “*No, I want to keep them on. They fit me so well, and I love the way the smell of death that lingers upon them?*” Of course not! Therefore, when we receive our new nature, when we are resurrected, cleansed from our old dead selves, it should be only natural that we desire to cast off the filthy garments that we were wearing in the tomb. Would it not?

Peter lists a few of the filthy stains that are imprinted upon our grave clothes, as it were. The list is not exhaustive, mind you, but the points that he makes are well taken. Malice (*kakia* in the Greek) speaks of the general evil that is inherent in our old nature. The word can also be translated as depravity, and it goes without saying that when we were dead in our trespasses, depravity perfectly describes exactly who we were. Paul speaks of the unregenerate in his letter to the church in Rome.

**Their throat is an open grave; they deceive with their tongues. Vipers venom is on their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and wretchedness are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.**

**Romans 3:13-18**

And that my friends is about as descriptive as it gets in describing the filthy garments of our old nature.

Peter continues by further describing attitudes of our unregenerate hearts. Deceit (*dolos*) which is better translated as *guile*, is doing whatever it takes in order to get what we want. Guile is the method by which we deceive people in order to use them. As Warren Wiersbe has so eloquently stated: “*In our universe there is a God and there are people and things. We were made so that we should worship God, love people and use things. However, if we worship ourselves, we will ignore God, start loving things and begin to use people.*” Again, behold the filthy garments of our former nature.

Peter also speaks of hypocrisy, pretending to be what we know that we are not. The word in the Greek was originally used to describe an actor in a play who wore masks to convey the emotion he desired to express. It is in this context that we see someone putting on a face of purity, while there is poison lurking behind the mask. Jesus was extremely hard on the Pharisees during His time on earth, for He could see right through their pretense of piety into the darkened abysses of their hearts. So many people today, even in religious circles, have a side they show the public and a darker side that they wish to conceal. But if we allow the Spirit to transform us, we won’t have to pretend any longer. For what you see will be what you get, as the old proverb goes. Genuine Believers will be still be genuine when no

one is around to see them! Again, we have not been called to act like Christians, but rather, we have been reborn so that we can *be* Christian.

The last two stains upon the garments of the unregenerate that Peter mentions are envy and slander. How many times do we see these things on display in America politics today? Politicians crave the power of others, so they slander their opponents in order to take away what they have in order to obtain it for themselves. It isn't just the politicians who do this mind you, but they are such a perfect example of this attitude that I felt it appropriate to illuminate the reference.

So, as we examine the filthiness of these stains upon our old grave clothes, is it any wonder that we, as born again Believers, should long to cast them aside? After all, if we had a show of hands today of how many here would want to be seen in public wearing such wretched clothing, how many of us would want to be seen this way? Answer: none. So here is our dilemma. We can either pretend we are not wearing such stains upon our persons (*hypocrisy*), or we can take them off and cast them aside, never to take them up again. So how do we do this? Peter is standing at the ready to show us the way!

### **Take In (vs. 2-3)**

**Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of The Word, so that by it you may grow up into your salvation, if you have tasted that The LORD is good. 1 Peter 2:2-3**

In order to *take off* the filthy garments of sin, we must regularly *take in* The Word of God! I absolutely love the analogy of new born infants desiring the "*pure milk of The Word*". First of all, the word used for desire (*epipotheo*) conveys an intense craving for something. Those who have been born again by the working of The Spirit through The Word will naturally have an intense craving for more and more of The Word of God. Just as *love* is a sign of a person who has been born again, so is the *craving* for God's Word. Show me a "believer" who is devoid of *agape* and has no *appetite* for The Word, and I will show you a hypocrite who is pretending to be a believer.

Sandi and I have a new grandson. I'm trying to work this into every sermon these days because, well... I have a new grandson! I love watching this little guy when he sees a bottle. His face lights up, and he kicks his legs and waves his arms like he's just seen the most amazing thing ever. He has an intense craving for his milk. And amazingly enough, no one had to teach the little guy about this, it just came naturally. So is the case with someone who has been reborn as a newborn babe in Christ. You don't have to tell them they need a craving for The Scriptures, they come to the realization naturally.

Sadly today, many so called "*churches*", in an attempt to boost membership (and profits), have watered down The Word of God and replaced it with dime store psychology and feel good messages on self esteem and personal enrichment. As a result, we have beautiful buildings jam packed with religious sounding lost people and prosperity gospel preachers flying in private jets and laughing all the way to the bank.

So how is it exactly that a newborn babe is able to part with its old clothes? Answer: It GROWS out of them! By feeding on The Word, The Spirit enables us to grow spiritually. Or as Peter has so eloquently stated, we "*grow up into our salvation.*" There is another word for this that we know all too well. It is *sanctification*, the conforming of ourselves into the image of Christ. And the only way that this can happen is be regularly feeding upon The Word.

Peter finished this analogy by saying, "*If you have tasted to see that The LORD is good.*" This could be better translated, "Since you have tasted"... for he is most definitely speaking to Believers in this instance. To come to Christ is to know of His goodness, and as a result, we naturally long to experience all that there is to know in Him. And we need The Word in order to fully embrace the fullness of Christ; to abide in Him.

Jesus Himself described just how His Word will enable us to cast off our old natures. The night before He went to the cross, in the upper room, He instructed His disciples to abide in Him, and they would bear lasting fruit (***John15***). And He reminded them that it was His Word that would "prune" them. This is a reference to the purging of the things of our old nature that hinder us from being fruitful in the

Kingdom. Just as a gardener prunes a vine in order to make it more productive, Christ uses His Word in order to make us produce lasting spiritual “fruit”, as it were.

***I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener. Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. You are already clean (pruned) BECAUSE OF THE WORD I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU. Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in Me.*** **John 15:1-4** (illumination and emphasis added)

There are many, I am sure, who would prefer to have a steady diet of cotton candy, rather than genuine nourishment (hence the abundance of false teachers in this world). But such appetites cannot produce healthy children. If you want a child to grow, then it must receive the nutrition it needs, or it will fail to thrive. God’s chosen people, those who have been born again of His Spirit, will naturally crave The Word. And by regular feeding on the word, they outgrow the filthy clothing of their former fleshly natures, and they will be clothed in the righteousness of Christ. So we need to take in The Word in order to take off our old nature. This is why we strive to teach The Word of God in our church. Without it, you have malnourished infants, who will never grow into the image of Christ.

#### **Take Your Place (vs. 4-5)**

***As you come to Him, a living stone — rejected by people but chosen and honored by God — you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.***  
**1 Peter 2:4-5**

We either fall upon The Rock that is Christ and find salvation, or one day, The Rock will fall upon us, and we will be destroyed by God’s wrath (**Matthew 21:44; Daniel 2:34-35**). Jesus is The Chief Cornerstone, the very foundation, if you will, of The Church. And those of us who come to Him are being built into a great spiritual house. Paul also speaks of this in the book of Ephesians.

***He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. In Him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in The LORD. In Him you are also being built together for God’s dwelling in The Spirit.*** **Ephesians 2:17-22**

But Paul’s metaphor leaves out one element that is only fitting for Simon Peter to include. Jesus Christ is our “*living stone*”, and those who are in Him are also “*living stones*” being built into a spiritual house. It should not be lost upon us as to exactly how Peter relates to this truth, for upon his own profession of faith in Christ, his name was changed from *Simon* (meaning one who hears) to *Petros* (or *Peter*, meaning small stone, **Matthew 16:15-18**). Peter fully understood that to be in Christ was to indeed share in His very nature. He is our living stone, and in Him, we also become living stones. He is living, because He was dead, but is now alive forevermore, and in Him, we too have everlasting life.

So we the born-again Church of The Living God are now being built up into a spiritual house, or temple. Where once the glory of God filled the Holy of Holies within *The Old Testament* Jewish temple, God now fills His own people, and they are His holy temple. So as Believers, we must take our place within this temple.

**Don't you yourselves know that you are God's temple and that The Spirit of God lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is holy, and that is what you are. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17**

And not only are we God's temple, His dwelling place for The Spirit that lives within us, but we are also a *holy priesthood* serving within God's temple. Did you know that if you are in Christ you are now considered a priest? It is a spiritual reality known as "*the priesthood of the Believer.*" And just as the *Old Testament* priests from the tribe of Levi were set apart and consecrated to offer sacrifices to The LORD, we too are to offer up sacrifices to Him. But the sacrifices we are to offer are spiritual in nature as opposed to lambs, bulls, and goats.

So exactly what are the sacrifices that we, as God's priests in His spiritual temple, are required to offer? They are listed for us in The Scriptures. Once again, we must take in The Word in order to know how to function as a holy priesthood. The sacrifices we offer are these: **1) Our bodies (Romans 12:1)**. All that we are is to be dedicated to God as a living sacrifice. **2) Our praise and worship (Hebrews 13:15)**. **3) Our good works**; the things we do to serve one another (Hebrews 13:16). **4) Our finances**. The offerings of our money to advance the kingdom of God (Philippians 4:10-20). And finally, **5) Saved souls**. Even those we lead to Christ are considered our spiritual offerings to The LORD (Romans 15:16). These are the sacrifices that we are required to make to God as priests in His spiritual temple.

So, in conclusion, we are to *take off* the old filthy garments stained with the sin of our former lives. We are to do so, by *taking in* The Word, so that we may grow up into the salvation to which we have been called. And we are to *take our place* as living stones and holy priests offering sacrifices to The One Who has redeemed us from bondage. To be mature in this our holy calling, we must *take off*, *take in*, and *take our place*. What an abundant and glorious life we have by the grace of Christ Jesus!

TRUTH!!!