

3. A Trustworthy Saviour

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[0 : 00] Let's pray together. Also, Paul said, I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to the salvation of everyone who believes.

Father, those words written nearly two millennia ago are still true, still powerful in our world, and indeed will be until the Lord returns.

And we thank you that this is a message that can be preached in every part of the world, in every language, to every condition, to every situation.

We thank you that this living word of the living Lord Jesus Christ brings its message of hope, of transformation, and of warning of judgment to come.

And Father, we thank you for those who down the centuries have preached that message, have faithfully passed it on. Indeed, we go back right to the beginning and thank you for Moses, to whom was given the first revelation, and on whom all the other writers, the prophets, the poets, the historians, the wisdom writers built.

[1 : 14] For the apostles who were there and saw the word made flesh, and who took that message to every land and race, preaching to all, redeeming grace, building his church in every place.

And because of their efforts, because of their labors, we are here today. And we pray, Lord, that that great message will come to us with renewed power, with renewed freshness.

It is a message, Father, for the whole world, not just for the individual, though it is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. It is a message that transforms communities, that opens up horizons never dreamed of before, and that indeed points to the new heaven and the new earth wherein lives righteousness.

And so, Father, we come to you. To him we come, Jesus Christ, our Lord. We live in you. His power can break the chains of sin.

And still all life storms without within. Help us, the daily fight to win. And it is indeed a battle.

Christian life is not easy, and the apostles do not pretend that it is.

[2 : 31] And so help us as we open our hearts and minds to your word. We pray that the gracious Holy Spirit, who inspired that word, will himself be with us, that he will read with us its living pages and reveal the living Lord.

And so bless us now, Father, in these moments that we have come to listen to your word. And bless us as we leave, transformed and changed by that same message.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Now we come to the third of this series. It is a short passage, chapter 2, verses 4 to 8.

If you turn to page 1014 in the Bibles. I am actually going to start reading a bit earlier. But in fact, I am going to start reading in verse 19 of chapter 1.

And then down to verse 8 of chapter 2. So on Peter, chapter 1. Peter is speaking about the gospel. Knowing you were transformed, he says, from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers.

[3 : 41] Not with perishable things such as silver or gold. But with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb, without blemish or spot.

He was foreknown before the foundation of the world. What was made manifest in the last times for your sake. Who through him are believers in God. Who raised him from the dead and gave him glory.

So that your faith and hope are in God. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth.

For a sincere brotherly love. Love one another earnestly.

From a pure heart. Since you have been born again. Not of perishable seed. But of imperishable.

Through the living and abiding word of God.

For all flesh is like grass. For all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers. And the flower falls. The word of the Lord remains forever.

[4 : 40] This word is the good news that was preached to you. So put away all malice. And all deceit. And hypocrisy. And envy. And all slander. Like newborn infants.

Long for the pure spiritual milk. That by it you may grow up to salvation. If indeed that you have tasted that the Lord is good. Now our passage for today.

As you come to him. A living stone. Rejected by men. But in the sight of God. Chosen and precious. You yourselves like living stones.

Are being built up as a spiritual house. To be a holy priesthood. To offer spiritual sacrifices.

Acceptable to God. Through Jesus Christ. Or it stands in scripture.

Behold I am laying inside a stone. A cornerstone. Chosen and precious. And whoever believes in him. Will not be put to shame. So the honor is for you who believe.

[5 : 40] But for those who do not believe. The stone that the builders rejected. Has become the cornerstone. And a stone of stumbling.

And a rock of offense. They stumble. Because they disobey the word. As they were destined to do. Amen. That is the word of the Lord.

And may God bless it. To our hearts and minds. In him. In Christ. There is no east and west.

In him. All nations shall be blessed. I sang that a few moments ago. One of the exciting things about the gospel. Is it brings together people from all over the world.

And in a world which is increasingly international. In a city which is international. That is one of the great and wonderful things about the gospel. Now over the years.

[6 : 40] Many people from different cultures. From different religions. Have indeed come to him. You may have heard of the remarkable Indian Christian. Sadhuar Sundar Singh.

Who was converted in the early years of the 20th century. Brought up in the Punjab area. Brought up in the Sikh religion. But at the age of 16. He was converted.

Disowned by his family. Persecuted. But spending his time spreading the gospel. Spreading the news. The good news. The word is the good news that was preached to you.

One time he was in London. And a professor of comparative religion. Said to him. What did you find in Christianity that was different? What new philosophy?

What new ideas did you find that weren't in Sikhism? And he replied. Professor. I found the dear Lord Jesus. That's what our passage is about.

[7 : 41] Not I found a new religion. Not I found a new theory. I found he says. The dear Lord Jesus. Because in the last analysis.

The gospel is not about Christ. The gospel is Christ. The living word of God. To which the written word so fully and faithfully points.

So in this little series. Come to him. This is the very heart of our passage. Indeed the heart of our series. And our subject today is a trustworthy savior.

We looked at the living hope. The living hope that comes from the resurrection from the dead of the Lord Jesus Christ. Looked last week at the holy life. Which is the gift of grace by which we respond to it.

And now today looking at Jesus Christ himself. Verse 4 of chapter 2. Come to him. A living stone. Rejected by men.

[8 : 41] But in the sight of God. Chosen. And precious. So. Let's look at these. This short passage then. For a few moments. A very short passage.

A very dense. But densely packed passage. Remind you. 1 Peter. Chapter 2. Verses 4 to 8. And it's on page 1014.

Of the Bibles. On the seats there. Now. It's very important to notice exactly what this verse says.

This verse can be read as come to him.

That is to say something that we do. We make a decision to come to him. And some of the versions translated. But that's not the best translation.

And indeed the translation we have here is a better one. As you come to him. Because the parallel in verse 5. You are being built up.

[9 : 38] Notice what it says. As you come to him. You are being built up. In other words. This is an initiative of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings us to Christ. And in him.

We are built up. Rather than first and foremost. The decision that we make. Obviously. We have to choose to follow Christ. No one ever. Sort of sleepwalked. Into being a Christian. Nevertheless. The initiative comes from God himself. And we'll come to that in a moment or two. At the end of the passage. So. That's the first thing to notice. This is God's initiative. The God of the living hope. The God who calls us to the holy life. He is bringing us to him. There's two things I want to see. Two things in this passage. First of all. There is a true reality. And there is a trustworthy word. So let's look first of all. [10:33] At the true reality. As you come to him. As you come to Christ. A living stone. Well. Why choose Christ? It doesn't seem obvious. Christ is rejected. We are told. Rejected by men. Now. That doesn't mean of course. Rejected by every individual. Obviously. But it does mean. The generality of people. Often reject him. They don't see any value in him. And the contrast here. Between the assessment of the world. And the assessment of God. rejected by men. Chosen by God. This has always been the case. In the catacombs. Under the city of Rome. A piece of ancient graffiti. Was discovered. And. There's a crude drawing there. Of a figure. Hanging on a cross. And the crucified man. Has an ass's head. A donkey's head. [11:30] And in front of it. There is a kneeling figure. And the inscription reads. Alex Semenos. Worships. His God. Even in those early centuries. He was rejected. Ridiculed. And of course. Nowadays. Richard Dawkins. And the other horsemen. Of the apocalypse. Want to drive. To carry. Horses. And. And chariots. Through the. Through the gospel. There is always. Ridicule. Of the gospel. There is rejection. Of the gospel. For many of the. The first readers. Of this letter. There would be persecution. There would be hostility. There would even be death. Itself. To. Reject. Christ. Is a very. Very strong. Temptation. Indeed. Why do you think. Paul says. I'm not ashamed. Of the gospel. The words I use. Beginning of our prayer. Because of the daily. [12:26] Temptation. To be ashamed. Of the gospel. As us who are Christians. Know very well. It's very easy. To be ashamed. Of the gospel. Isn't it? To keep. A kind of guilty silence. When Christ. Is being attacked. Not to speak. When we ought to speak. And so on. Temptation. Is very. Very strong. But. Notice. The assessment. Of God. In the sight of God. Chosen. And. Precious. As we're precious. Is very interesting. Because the card already. Back in chapter 1. Verse 19. We'd read that. With the precious blood of Christ. Like that of a lamb. With blemish. Without blemish. And spot. Later on. In his second letter. Peter is going to describe the gospel. As great. And precious. Promises. Highly valued. Things which do not lose their value. [13:20] Things. Things which. Have a true value. And here. Chosen by God himself. A true assessment. Of what matters. See at the heart of everything. Is the relationship. With Christ. The living relationship. With the living Lord. Now. That doesn't mean of course. The Christ of our own fantasies. And our imaginations. Because Peter is going to go on. And we'll come to this in a moment. To show that this Christ. The only true Christ. Is the biblical Christ. Who has been prophesied. For long centuries. Before. After all. There are many. Many. Many. Jesuses. Offer themselves. In the supermarket. Of ideas. For some people. Jesus. A political agitator. The honorable member. For Galilee North. Or something like that. For others. He is the Jesus. Of liberal. Prothesis. And the gentle. Jesus. Meek and mild. Of the late. Nineteenth century. [14:17] Who went around. Talking platitudes. About loving one another. And the fatherhood of God. You can be absolutely certain. That's not true. Nobody who goes around. Saying these kind of things. Ends up on a cross. He is a radical. Indeed. Challenging the establishment. But. There are so many. Pictures. Of Jesus. Which are little more than. Fantasies. Little more than projections. Of our own ideas. But here. Peter is going to speak. About who he truly is.

Come to him. Not just. Not just somebody. Who appeared. In the middle of time. Without any preparation. Or without any. Any lead up to it. This is the one. Whose. Message. And whose personality. Fulfills. What the ancient prophets said. So first of all. There is a true reality. The true reality. Is. The.

[15:11] In the sight of God. Chosen. And precious. There is no blessing. In this world. Or in the world. Come. Which is not going to come.

Through the Lord Jesus Christ. And his cross. And resurrection. There is no. Hope. For time. And eternity. That doesn't flow. From that.

From the precious. Blood of Christ. And from the living hope. He was raised. From the dead. But the. Second thing. I want to talk about. Is the trustworthy. Word. How do.

How are we going to know him. After all. Only. Several hundred people. Knew him. In his earthly life. Only. And of them. Only a handful.

Knew him very well. So how are those. As the centuries pass. How is it. That we are going to come to him. That we are going to know him. That's the point.

[16:04] Of these quotations. From scripture. That Peter goes on with. In the. In verses. Five. To eight. It's very interesting. Isn't it. Peter.

Had known Jesus. In his earthly life. Not only had Peter. Known Jesus. Peter being one of the three. Along with James and John. Who were especially close. To Jesus.

Peter could no doubt. Have told us. Loads of stories. About Jesus. Loads of anecdotes. Peter could have told us. What height he was. What his voice. Sounded like. What the color.

Of his hair was. What kind of food. He liked. And so on. You know. The kind of little details. That we enjoy. In biographies. But the point. Is none of these things. Would have amounted.

To a gospel. The point. Is that. Peter. Is going to tell us. When we come to him. Peter. Is going to use words. From the Bible.

[16:59] Rather than. His own words. Because. In the Old Testament. Scriptures. We have a. Far more. Full. Far more. Detailed. And. Far more.

Accurate. Picture. Of Jesus. The Lord. Jesus. The Messiah. Jesus. The one. Who is to come. Jesus. The Savior. Than could have. Possibly. Been gained.

From Peter's. Anecdotes. And. Reminiscences. And. First of all. Well. He uses. Two particular metaphors. One is. Stones. Verse five. A living.

Verse four. First of all. He is a living. Stone. And in him. You become. Living stones. Now the Bible. Often mixes. Its pictures. Not because the authors.

Are mixed up. Because it's bringing together. Two ideas. First of all. The fact that it's a stone. A rock. Means that we can build our lives. On him. But the fact that it is living.

[17:55] Means that it is not static. This is something that's going to grow. And to develop. And building our lives. On him. Means that we ourselves. Become living stones.

And we become a house. A temple. Now in the. In the old testament. God. God's desire. Was to live. With his people. Right. The very beginning.

He comes down. To the garden of Eden. To be. To speak with. To company with. Adam and Eve. Abraham. Walks. With God. Then later on. He says to Moses.

Build me a tent. Build me a tabernacle. That I may live there. Later on. Solomon. Is to build the temple. The point is. His people now.

Are that. Temple. It's not a building. This. This building. Where it is. Not the house of God. A house of God. The people of God. Meet here. The church. That meets here.

[18:51] Is the. Is the. Is the house of God. Not the building. Itself. How attractive. And useful. Buildings. May be. Peter is making the point. When we come to Christ.

We have a solid foundation. But we also have a living relationship. And that's. That's the first thing. We become living stones. As we build our lives.

On the living stone. He is the. Later on. Verse. Six. I'm laying inside a stone. A cornerstone.

Chosen. And precious. Whoever believes in him. Will not be put to shame. Whoever builds on him. Will not be put to shame. And the other metaphor. Is verse five. A holy priesthood.

This is a much more personal. Thing. Than the. Than the temple. Now. What. What does a priest. Do. A priest. Represents. God. To people.

[19:48] And people. To God. That is the task. Of the ancient priesthood. In the old testament. Now. All God's people. Are priests. All God's people. Have the task. Of bringing the word.

The living word. To other people. That's what priestly ministry means. In the. In the new testament. We are to worship him. With the whole of our lives. Yes.

We. We sing hymns. We. We have services. But that doesn't stop. When we leave the building. It doesn't begin. When we enter the building. It's the whole of our.

The whole of our lives. To offer. Spiritual. Sacrifices. Now. Neither here. Not anywhere else. In the new testament. Does spiritual mean. An elite. Who have certain.

Who have certain. Qualities. Which are. Not open. To the rest. Of God's people. Spiritual. Are those. In whose lives. The holy spirit.

[20 : 44] Is at work. That's what spiritual. Means. There's no such thing. As a spirituality. As divorced. From the holy spirit. Because if it is divorced. From the holy spirit. Very very soon.

You'll be getting into all kinds of nonsense. Go to Waterson's. And look at the mind. Body. And spirit section. And some of the appalling books there. About spirituality.

And you'll. And you'll see what I mean. So you see. In both cases. The reality is fulfilled. God is building a temple. And this temple is not dead stones.

But living stones. God is raising up priests. To worship him. And to. Bring his presence. To others. But.

And we'll finish on this point. There is personal choice. Look at verse 8. A stone of stumbling. And a rock of offense. He is rejected.

[21 : 41] By many. And in both. And both. Fulfill. What the Old Testament prophets said. This child. This man. This chosen of God.

Some will accept. And some will reject. They stumble. Because they disobey the word. As they were destined. To do. Does that mean people have no choice.

That they are forced into accepting. Or rejecting. Now remember this. The question we must all ask ourselves. Is not. Am I one of the chosen.

But. Will I believe. That's the question we need to ask. As Christ is presented. Because. If we are called into a relationship.

With the Lord. No relationship works. Unless it's a two way relationship. Relationship. If you ever try to have a relationship. With somebody who is not interested. In having a relationship with you.

[22 : 39] You know exactly what I mean. The word of God. Comes. And it hardens some people's hearts. Because they reject it. They want their own way.

The sun. That. The sun that melts ice. Also hardens clay. So let's never use this. As an excuse. For not believing.

Or as an excuse. For not sharing the gospel. With others. Question. Each one of us. Must ask. As I say. Not. Am I one of the chosen.

But will I believe. What does believe mean? Believe means. Coming to him. The living stone. Being built up. In the spiritual house.

And offering. Sacrifices. Acceptable to God. Through Jesus Christ. In whom. Every blessing. In time and eternity. Comes to us. Amen.

[23 : 34] Let's pray. Until at the last. With joy. We'll see. Jesus in glorious majesty.

Live with him. Through eternity. Reigning Lord. Father. We pray indeed. That everyone in this room. May indeed be those. Who come to him. Who are built up.

As a spiritual house. And who offer. Spiritual sacrifices. Through Jesus Christ. Bless us now. As we leave here. And go about. Our ordinary business.

And give to us. That sense. Of being loved. By you. And that sense. Of the living hope. Which calls us. Into fellowship. With him.

The Lord Jesus Christ. In whose name we pray. Amen.