

Longing For The Word Of God

A Reflection on 1 Peter 2:4-6 and Our Connection to Jesus

ANTHONY KIM

Please turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 2. Start with verse 4 this evening. Briefly, I'm going to touch on last week's message, particularly with verse 3, where it says, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," and that text is referencing Psalm 34:8. I caught this week something interesting you might be interested in. If you look at Psalm 34:8, it says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." Taste compared to tasted. So, taste is saying, "I invite you to experience God's goodness, and I want to find refuge in Him." In Psalm 34:8, it's an invitation. I want you to see that. Then we go to verse 3, and we see "tasted that the Lord is gracious."

This individual has tasted, that metaphor, the sense of describing a personal experience and appreciation for God's goodness, which started in conversion, in your personal trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. So, it's an experiential, transformative experience that all of us as believers have experienced. With that, Peter is saying, "Continue in this, continue to taste that the Lord is gracious, that He is good." So, it's a continual spiritual growth because, remember, we talked about the text where it says to drink from the sincere milk from the Word of God. That's how we grow spiritually as believers.

We see here Peter expanding on Psalm 34:8, this continual growth in our Christian walk. Something I want you to now notice when we go into verse 4, because now you understand the reasoning of Peter writing in verse 4, the importance, because he's going to dive into a reminder that we're being fed by the Word. We're being grown by the Word spiritually. Our true identity and our value are not found in man's opinions. It's not found in what we achieve but in the relationship we have with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He says in verse 4, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone." In the Greek here, it means the idea of remaining, remaining with who we're going to see. It means to remain in the presence of Christ in intimate fellowship, looking back to John 15:5-15, this is Jesus and the vine and the branches, us, this connection, this intimate relationship, this vital relationship we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a reminder that it's daily. It's a daily personal relationship with Christ. It's a continual relationship with Christ, beginning at but not limited to the time of conversion.

Continuing on, this word "coming" is what's laid before us, that there should be progress. There should be continual spiritual growth. I gave the reference of vegetables, of every living thing, animals; there is a process of growth, similar to us as believers. There is growth spiritually, and there is to be progress in our spiritual life, both individually as well as in a community of believers. It's this movement toward Christ, the

whole spiritual nature of man. What is the spiritual essence of man? Well, it's a combination of many things, beginning with our thoughts, then our loves, our purposes, our desires, our hopes, where our will is. All of that is you as a man of God or a woman of God spiritually. We are to grow in all these: in our thoughts about God, our love toward Christ, our purposes found in the Word of God for our lives, our desires changing more into God's desires, our hopes more anchored in the Lord Jesus Christ, and doing God's will and not our own. Amen.

As we come near to Him, day by day, we realize it's His nearness to us that makes all the difference. It's not all about what we do, but His nearness. That's why Peter says "coming"; by coming to the Lord is the most important step before any other step in your walk with the Lord because He must occupy all of who you are. This is how you're going to find that your actions are produced by spending time with Him intimately. As you experience more of His love toward you and you grasp the reality that this connection you have is inseparable, no one can separate you from the love of God through Christ. No one. That's a depiction of the vine and the branches. We are grafted into the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything He says, we want to listen. All the commands, everything He asks us to obey, everything He says to turn away from, we listen to because we love Him. We love Him and His Word. Amen.

Even though physically there is a great gulf, isn't there? Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God the Father. Here we are on earth, a great distance, but yet our thoughts can be connected to Him. Our love can be connected to Him. Our hearts can constantly be renewed on a day-to-day basis. Our minds can be renewed on a day-to-day basis. Our wills can be set to His time and His purposes for us. That is a paradox. It is a paradox. But honestly, what is a greater battle for us is how that word "coming" can be the thing that stops us from growing, from that first step of coming to Him, wanting His nearness again, that intimate fellowship with Him. We must continually think about this word. It's a progression. It's a progressive word.

I want to turn our attention to Matthew 24:24. You don't have to turn to it, but ultimately in this text, he says that the elect, those who are chosen, those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot ultimately be deceived. 1 Peter 1:5 says that we're kept by the power of God through faith. Ephesians 1:4 says we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Jude 1 says, "Preserved in Jesus Christ." This is who we are in the Lord Jesus. It's not by our power that we can come to Him, not by us trying to keep ourselves blameless, but Him keeping us blameless. It is Him that keeps us preserved. I bring out those texts to show that ultimately God is the one doing the producing in us to come to Him.

As we do, we carry on in this life that seems to be a paradox day in and day out. But this should not stop us from coming to Him and being near to Him, for He is our true home in resting in Him. The nearness is what we are to make a daily, constant longing for. Think about this: we're coming to a God that constantly is glory. There's constant glory coming from Him, constant knowledge coming out from Him. When we're attached to Him, we are constantly growing. There is no definite end. My apologies. We are

constantly increasing in our knowledge of Him and our growth in Him. As we stay close to Him, we may not feel as if we're near Him physically. We may not feel the fullness that He brings to us by being empty. We may never reach the point beyond this union that's possible spiritually, this work of the Spirit. But that should not stop us as we are here on earth.

Now I want us to take us to the next part of the passage where it says, "Unto a living stone." This is reflecting back to Matthew 16:18, where Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church," speaking of Peter, and it's very clear here that Peter is not the living stone; this is Jesus Christ. He is the living stone. Matthew 21:42, referencing Himself as the stone, the living stone, He says to disciples, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." This is a direct quotation from Psalm 118:22. Then He speaks of Himself in Matthew 21:44: "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Let me tell you a little bit about this passage. He's saying, "Anyone that falls on this stone is to come to Christ for salvation in this age, which is the day of grace." But then He says, "But whosoever it shall fall," who is this? It is the one that rejects Christ as He falls later in judgment. Second coming prophesied in Daniel 2:34, 44, relating to His second coming. He was telling His disciples right from the very beginning when He was here on earth what He was depicting Himself as the stone.

This description of Jesus as a living stone brings us life to this illustration, tying back to chapter 1 about being begotten again, which is being born again by what? Through the resurrection and the living Word of Jesus Christ. This word "living" is consistent with what Peter has written already, also in 1 Peter 1:23. Other passages we can reference to the living stone are John 5:26: "For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." 1 John 5:12 says, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." He cannot have made it more explicit, could He, of this living stone referenced here in 1 Peter chapter 2.

We're aware of this stone that is represented of Jesus Christ. Other things I'm just kind of going through Scripture now. Just bear with me. I'm going to try to make a point here. We see in John 4:10-14, He represents Himself as living water. John 7:37-39, the living bread. So repetition, right? It's important. He's trying to convey something very important for us to know as believers. 1 Peter 1:3, living hope. Going back now to "Lord is gracious." Who are we coming to? To the one we've truly tasted, that He is good and gracious. He's the living stone described in Scripture, the one who is living, that has life, and we are to build upon because, in Matthew 7:24, we build upon the solid foundation, which is He is the solid foundation.

The emphasis here is that it's not speaking of Jesus as an example that we can follow from the past that we can't do what He has done. But here, it is the one who is alive and with whom we are to be connected because we have received life from Him. He wants us to know we're a foundation. We have a foundation that's living. This metaphor of a living stone is important for us to know because we're going to see in the next passage

of Scripture, which I'm going to get to. This is important for us to know before we get there. Just a little note here about what this stone is. It would be considered what's called a dressed stone. What is that? In constructions of temples and palaces. Keep that in the frame of mind because, going back to Matthew 21:42, He said the stone which the builders rejected in this context, the builders rejected the stone, this piece of construction stone upon a temple.

We're going to go back to the Old Testament here because, as Gentiles, we don't belong to this heritage of understanding temples and palaces, right? This is going back to much of Old Testament understanding. We're going to look at what all of this is referring to. A living stone. Acts 2:23-24. Let me just say this first before I get to where I'm going to get at. Peter said this, in the first sermon, about Jesus, that He was delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God. You have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death. This passage is focusing on the resurrection of Christ. Without His resurrection, there is no eternal life for us as believers. When you put all this together about His life and His resurrection, He's foundational to our eternal life. He's foundational to us living as Christians.

We're going to see that in this passage in verse 4, that many people rejected Him, but He was chosen of God and precious. He was chosen of God and precious. Another way of saying that is that He's precious in the sight of God. That's a text of my sermon. I want to reference this clearly, as this is God's choosing, His foreknowledge, His predetermined counsel, His wisdom, His plan for the way Jesus was going to be our foundation to our lives.

I know I mentioned that I was going to go to the living stone. I'm not there yet. Let me just touch on some of this about being chosen of God and then precious. I mentioned a previous passage about precious. The word "precious" has been used many, many times by Peter, and here I just want to point out this word means honorable, to lift Him up as honor above all of every person in existence. He is the precious one chosen of God. By doing so, we can also be seen as precious because, didn't He elect us? He chose us before the foreknowledge of God. It all comes back to how was a relationship with Jesus and with God the Father. You see how we are today, who we are today, chosen of God, precious in His sight. Because it starts here with how God saw Jesus as precious and chosen.

Verse 5, taking the metaphor further, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." This is referencing drawing near to Jesus Christ and His life as He passes us through our hearts and our minds. We see that we are in Him. We're shaped and likened to Him. Similar to Him as a living stone, we are lively stones in the plural. So, these are all believers. Same makeup, stone. We share in what Jesus wants to share with us. We see this by the word "adoption of sons." You hear the word "light of the world," or we are called light of the world. Other texts that we see, the Apostle ascribes

here in similar fashion, that what is called by Christ, we are called in similar ways. He uses that same thing that He remembered, and He uses it here.

This is the passage where I am going to dive in with the idea of Jesus Christ and explaining this word “stone” and a temple upon these stones. The stone was built upon. Judaism was the religion that was pertinent during this time. Contrasting to Judaism is this word “spiritual house.” It’s elaborated in the book of Hebrews. I’m not going to go too deep into it like the book of Hebrews, but I am going to reference some of it here regarding what were the duties in the temple and what is the similarity with the spiritual house of who we are as Christians. We’re going to see here that in the Old Testament, there were rituals and ceremonial systems that were prescribed, but they were all temporal. They were never to be permanent. We see that with Peter, that he uses these references to show that those were never complete pictures of who we were to become.

The temple, as it were, had priests involved in them. There were temples and priesthoods within the Old Testament references here. Let’s go with the foundation of the stone. “To whom coming, a living stone.” 1 Corinthians 3:11 says, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” The foundation stone is doubtless taken from the corner of the temple area. This is what be built upon other stones. This is the foundational piece that 1 Corinthians 3:11 is describing.

Other things about the stones of the building, what is that? Before, there were physical stones; now, in the way Peter describes it, it’s spiritual people, spiritual men, in the living sense, which Christ is speaking of as living. If you turn to Ephesians 2:21, you understand what it’s saying? Let’s go up to verse 20: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

Now you can understand what this passage is talking about, the Holy Spirit is now being used here, and it’s upon us, upon this living stone, that we are to be part of this temple in the New Testament. The nature of this foundation, when it was material in the Old Testament, where the old temple was built on material stones, we are now spiritual stones, men alive unto God. Built the spiritual temple upon the spiritual stone, and we are alive unto God by Christ Jesus. We see that’s the word “living” there, living. It’s moving, active, right? A building is not supposed to move, but yet it’s used here as living because these stones are spiritual. They’re alive, and there’s activity.

This is hard to understand in the Western world because a lot of this is Eastern mind. I had to wrap my head around this, but let me just give you some understanding of metaphors and why they’re used so much in Scripture. It is for us to grasp deep truths, spiritual truths about God, a deep thinking and engaging in the heart and mind that will make an impact upon generation upon generation. A stone is a stone, right? But to get that imagery and understand what that looks like, you can see it. A lot of agriculture is used in references and metaphors as well. That was a side note to understand the metaphors used here.

The idea then is there's a foundation, then the stones of the building, then, third, we have the service with the building. You see here in verse 5, "To offer up spiritual sacrifices." Something is coming out of this building, something spiritual, like I said, spiritual stones, spiritual sacrifices. What this is, is that the heart is the same. The Old Testament and New Testament, the heart is the same. The difference is, it's no longer a ritual, as in the Old Testament, but rather, in the new, it's spiritual sacrifices. We're not killing an animal anymore, right? There are now spiritual applications to the sacrifice in this new dispensation. One of the things that they did in the Old Testament to understand here in the new is burnt offerings. They burnt offerings. What was that? A man would give his whole self to God, represented in the entire animal that was killed. It was not just one part; it was the whole animal that was burnt up, offered to God.

How does that relate to us? Do we just give partially to God spiritually, or do we give our whole selves spiritually? Well, there's a direct connection to that reference of the burnt offering. How are they? They include acts of praise, what God has done in our lives through our Lord Jesus Christ, thanksgiving in the moment of what He is doing in our lives, and our trust in Him. All those we want to continue to offer up to the Lord. This is the new spiritual life in the new. We're not bound by a rigid observance anymore, like in the old, but yet the heart is still the same. You give it your all. You give it your all. That is distinctly of God.

When it comes to being acceptable, you see there, "Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." I referenced in the past that God did everything for us, that He sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to sacrifice on our behalf, the sacrifice that we deserved. Jesus Christ paid on the cross for our sins. So holy, we are to that love that He gave to us. We are to live loving each other fervently, that same amount of love that He's given to us. We are, similarly, to do that with our spiritual sacrifices. You see the consistency with God and His Word and how we are to live our lives. Again, all this is born of God, begotten again. It's not of us. It's all of Him. Amen.

That word, "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," all this that we see in the Old Testament, why they had to do all those things and for us to see the importance of how God accepts things and how we are to be as well. How we are to be built up as a spiritual house, more on that, because, yes, it doesn't look similar to the rituals of the Old Testament, but we can see through Scripture, through the New Testament, what they are.

Let's look at some of that now. The materials, we don't have physical material anymore. That's no longer valid. But we are cut and polished by the Holy Spirit. He is the one, the active one, that is working in us, in our lives. He is the one that composes the material, as it were. That is the spiritual house. You see that it's not a physical house. It's a spiritual house that the Spirit indwells in. We see it in passages after passages about that. I won't go into too much detail, but here's something to take note of: the temple of stone, the temple of Christ's body, and then the living temple of the church. The first was destroyed, swept away. The second was removed and is now in heaven. The third remains and will continue to grow. That's us, the church. We are to grow in our spiritual

growth by the work of the Holy Spirit. He dwells in us, He fills us, He helps us to give glory to the Lord.

Romans 12:1, He gives us strength in our bodies to glorify Him. Philippians 4:18, He helps us to be generous, to give toward God's mission. Hebrews 13:15-16, He gives us the ability to praise, acknowledge God in His faithfulness. That's that inward work. Then, outwardly, the sacrifices of doing good to others, to loving one another as brethren and the lost. We can be generous in that. That's what the Spirit does in us. All of this by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are living because of Him, because of the Spirit's work in us.

Hebrews 13:16, a little bit more on that. He gives us wisdom to know how to share our resources. You ever personally experienced that in the church? Sharing amongst each other. He prompts you, "Hey, you should give to this person. They really need it." Who is that? It's not your flesh giving to your brother, your sister. That is of the Holy Spirit. He does the prompting. All these things, brethren, that we cannot see with our physical eye, it is of the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit of God.

Let me end with verse 6. It says, "Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." This text is the text that Peter uses to reference verse 4 and verse 5. You see how it's consistent with me using Scripture. Apostle Peter used Old Testament reference, and we see that He is Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone. That's how we know that He was elect and precious. Isaiah 28:16, and "Him shall we not be confounded." We will not be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's how, ultimately, you know that you are of Christ, that you never be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ in your life, whether you're witnessing to your family who are lost, whether it's your co-workers, to anybody else. Who is that dwelling in you to not be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ? That is the Spirit of God in you that dwells in you.

You can praise God. You can thank God that He's given you the strength to go day by day, living in the spiritual growth that has started with your conversion, the indwelling of the Spirit of God, and this growth that you have as you sit and stand and live for the Lord Jesus. This is how you will grow. Look at these verses again. They're very important passages. I wish I could have gone deeper into that, but time fails me. I hope this blessed you. It was a difficult couple of passages for me to look into, but I praise God that His Word does not return void. I hope that what sits with you is His Word and that that's what resonates with you.

If you're sitting here as a believer, you just felt confirmation after confirmation when you heard about the spiritual sacrifices that you get to do day in and day out. But if you're not a believer and you have no idea what does it mean to have a spiritual house, what does it mean to have the Spirit of God dwelling in me, it starts with conversion. It starts with conversion. Conviction comes from the outside. It does not come from yourself. The Holy Spirit works. He brings about your sin. He shows you your sin. He shows that you've been disobedient with His Word, with God's Word, and disobedient to not trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. If that's how you sense God working, allow the Spirit of

God to work deeper to point you to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom all of us as believers have experienced. That is what the Spirit of God will do initially in your life. May God bless you as you respond to Him and Him alone for salvation.

Let's pray. Father, thank You so much for this time that we got to spend in Your Word. Father, You know how difficult it was for me to study this, but I praise God, Lord, that You have helped me through it. Thank You for helping me with the words. I pray, Father, that it would fall in good ground, Lord, both to the lost and to the saved, to see truly the Lord Jesus Christ is first and foremost precious in Your sight. Thank You, Lord, that God, You laid the foundation for us by Jesus Christ being our foundation. It's a privilege, Father, to be called a living stone, that we can be alive in the Spirit of God. We can be alive to understanding Your Word. We can be alive to the things of God, not because of anything of ourselves, but because of all that You do, what You do through Your Word and Your Spirit. We thank You for that. I pray, Father, that You would just do a great work here, that You would do a thorough work here, because God, only You can take care of the results, which is salvation and spiritual growth in the believers. Please bless Your Word to this end and help us, as believers, to thank You, to praise You, to glorify You, and to continue to grow to the admonition of the Lord. Thank You for this in Jesus' name. Amen.