

# Who We Are In Him

1 Peter 2:4-8

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 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. 6 For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." 7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

(1 Peter 2:4-8 (ESV))

Over the recent weeks, our study into this passage has taken us into the reality of "Who Jesus really is" and into "Who He is in us", realizing that He truly is the "Cornerstone" of all that exists, both in the heavens and on the earth, things visible and things invisible, the Cornerstone upon which all of the realms of God and all of the realms of men are built; the Cornerstone of all things "Spiritual", all things relating to God, and to our relationship with Him, the very foundation-stone of all our hopes and happiness, the "Author and the Perfecter of our faith" who makes justice our measuring line and righteousness our plumb line. And knowing all of that to be so, a question that remains for us is a simple one. "What is to be our response to so great a provision of grace and mercy?"

It seems to be the nature within most all of us, to hope that our role in all that is required of us will be an easy one, that it will be God who does most all of the work that needs be done within our souls, to save us, to sanctify us and to somehow get us into eternal life in heaven with very little more required from us other than to simply say "yea and amen" we accept your wonderful free gift.

And God does do that. He really does do most all the work. Through the sacrifice made on the cross by the Lord Jesus and through the ongoing work that is being done within us by the Holy Spirit, most everything that is needed to get us into heaven has been accomplished by God Himself.

But with that being said, these scriptures are very clear that there still is much that is left for you and me to do. And again no, it is not something that will determine our eternal salvation. These words that we have just read in our scripture passage are directed towards those of us who are already saved and our eternal salvation is assured.

It rather has to do with that which immediately follows our initial salvation, the “relationship” that we will have with Christ now that we are saved, both for our living years and for all our future eternity. And may I say again to us that that is what Christianity is really all about. It is not about you and me following all the precious principles and guidelines given within these scriptures. Though those good principles and guidelines be right and so very, very necessary, the following of them is only a small part of the “next steps” of our precious salvation.

It is rather all about “relationship”, the relationship between a Father and His beloved sons and daughters, the relationship between a Bridegroom and His bride, the relationship of deep devotion and passionate love that binds every human heart together, both with God and with all the many other people with whom we have to do. It is “relationship”, “relationship”, “relationship”! Nothing less will do!

Jesus spoke this truth about relationship so very plainly in the words of John 17, when He said,

20 “I do not ask for these only (that you save and sanctify them), but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (John 17:20-23 (ESV))

Folks, may I observe again that this is not what most people experience in their daily attempt at Christianity. This is a whole other “next step”, one of actually becoming “one” in intimate relationship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

God has left much yet to be done on this earth and we are the ones being called to do it. Jesus came and began that work, but His great salvation was only the beginning for His people. We have much yet still remaining to be done, and we need to get on about it. But it is only through this “next step” of “oneness in relationship” with Christ that we will be “fitted” to move on forward and to carry out our commission. It is only through His abiding presence in us and our abiding presence in Him that we will be equipped for the task. Listen!

7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. (John 15:7-8 (ESV))

And listen!

12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14:12-14 (ESV)

And here in our scripture passage we see when and where it all is to begin and what it is to accomplish. It is to begin the very first moment that “we come to Him”. Listen!

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 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. (1 Peter 2:4-5 (ESV)

What is it that you and I are being asked to be and to do as we abide in Christ? . . . We are to take up the position that has been assigned to us within God’s most beloved structure, the church. And from there, we are to begin our work. Jesus is the first stone laid, the Cornerstone. And you and I are then the next stones put into place, “living stones” that have been empowered and equipped by God’s Holy Spirit to be the foundation of God’s “spiritual house”, and to be a “holy priesthood” who will minister and offer up “spiritual sacrifices” acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

And for anyone here today or in future days who might hear or read these scriptures and mistakenly think that this “Holy Priesthood” is speaking about the priesthood as put forth in the Roman Catholic Church, or other similar churches, it is not. There can be only a remote similarity, but then only if those priests have “come to the Lord Jesus” under the exact provisions required here in these scriptures, then yes, they might personally be a part of God’s precious “priesthood”. But regrettably, for the most part, those “priests” seem to be only priests of the Roman Catholic Church and not of the “Holy Priesthood of God”.

But also, for you and me, we ourselves must not be misled by some of the common teachings within our churches. We must, “come to the Lord Jesus” under the exact terms and conditions as given within these scriptures, else we ourselves will not be “ordained into God’s precious priesthood”.

With that being said, may we continue with verse 7 that tells us that this precious “priesthood” that we have been ordained into is of great honor, honor beyond measure for those of us who believe. And we dare not take it lightly. We must be warned that the duties and the requirements are strict and any violation of its standards will carry with it a severe penalty.

Recall in Leviticus chapter 10, when the sons of Aaron foolishly violated the holiness of God by offering “strange fires” in the temple, God immediately brought them to account for their misdeeds and behavior. You and I may never be in a circumstance where we could commit a similar sin as did Nadab and Abihu, but please understand, the principles and the holiness of God are still the same today as then.

As you and I come to the Lord Jesus and as we are ordained into His “Holy Priesthood”, everything really does change for us. We are no longer just seeking to save our own souls. We have stepped beyond and entered into a whole other “spiritual condition” in our relationship with Christ. We are now an ordained representative of God Himself. And as His representative, we are to be His personal Hand at work within the lives of others. We now have responsibilities that we never had before. Other people’s souls depend upon us and upon our “standing in the gap” to bring them out of their darkness into the kingdom of light.

May I say this again . . . before we received Christ as our Savior and Lord, we were concerned only about ourselves. But now, all that has changed. Have you not noticed that you now have affinities, and kinships and empathies that you never had before? You now have a much deeper care and love for other people than you have ever known before. That is the one “sure fire” testimony that you yourself have been delivered out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

You may question, “Oh, but I don’t know that I have much more love and care for other people than I had before. And perhaps your measure of love and care are still in their infancy. But the reality is, when the Holy Spirit moved in to take up residence within your heart, He really did begin to make changes within you. Where you hardly ever prayed, if at all, you now find yourself praying more, and not just for yourself! You have compassion and empathy towards others that you never had before. And many of your personal habits and behaviors have changed and are still changing all the more.

And now, in these words of this special passage, you find yourself face to face with a “next assignment” from God, one that will demand much from you. Listen! We are told here in verse 5 that as we come to Him,

5 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 (1 Peter 2:5 (ESV))

You might read these words and immediately become dismayed and want to say, “But wait, I didn’t know that I had signed up for such high and holy demands from God. When I accepted Jesus as my Savior, I was just trying to keep from going to hell. And

now, I'm being told here that I am now a 'priest', and I haven't the slightest idea about how to be a 'priest'." And I sure don't know all the laws of God that I will need to know as I begin to offer up "spiritual sacrifices". What if I do something wrong and offer up "strange fires" before God by accident?"

May I calm your concerns by saying that, the evidence behind the behavior of Nadab and Abihu is that they most likely had never surrendered their souls to God and therefore did not have the Holy Spirit guiding their behaviors! You however, if you have "come to Christ with surrendered hearts, then listen to God's reassurance in Philippians 4,

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJV)

The Holy Spirit, who abides within your spirit, will always be faithful to warn you away from foolish behavior, 1 Corinthians 10:13 assures us of that.

What then is it that God is calling you and me to be and to do as a "spiritual house" and as a "holy priesthood" "offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ?"

As you and I come to Christ Jesus and receive Him as Savior and Lord, we become actual "living stones" that make up a "Holy Temple" for God, a place of habitation for Him by His Spirit, a place for Him to abide and carry out His work throughout this world; and not just in us as individuals, but especially together as a larger body of believers, forming and making us the Church, spiritual men and women who unite together to offer up spiritual service to God, praying, praising, preaching, and worshipping Him.

And again, as the church, God calls each of us to become part of His "holy priesthood", men and women who will band together and "stand in the gap" between weak and wretched mankind and God, offering up "spiritual sacrifices" of prayers and supplications to atone for their sins, their iniquities and their transgressions.

Remember, God is holy and He requires holiness from each and every person that He has created. As we sin, we separate ourselves from God, sometimes so far that we believe ourselves to not be worthy to even enter into His presence to offer prayers for forgiveness. It is then that we most need a fellow believer to take up our cause, to become a "priest" who intercedes for us, offering up spiritual sacrifices to God the Father on our behalf.

Thankfully, on other occasions, when we see a fellow believer who needs a “priest” to intercede for him or her, we will then get the privilege of being the “priest” that they need. And this goes on and on, daily, hourly for the benefit of God’s people, the church.

As we step out in faith to be a “priest” on someone’s behalf, the Lord Jesus is our best and perfect example of what we are to do! He is our “Great High Priest”. In His death, His burial and His resurrection, He “stood in the gap” becoming the perfect “spiritual sacrifice” as He made atonement for all of the sins of all the world; and to make His “Priesthood” complete, He now sits at the right hand of God the Father, making continual intercession for each of us.

And while we can’t do as Jesus did in His “literal sacrifice”, we can become a “spiritual sacrifice” crying out to God and making intercession for all those who we know stand in the need of prayer.

One last thought . . . in verse 7 we read

7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” 8 and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. (1 Peter 2:7-8 (ESV))

There is a sure and certain “destiny” that has been set into place for all those who refuse to believe in Christ and who reject His free gift of salvation. Their sure and certain destiny is to suffer in the eternal burning pit of hell, no exceptions and no other options available, which then bespeaks an even more urgent need for you and me to be compassionate and enter into our prayer chamber and to offer up spiritual sacrifices for those dear lost ones.

Listen as I close . . .

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV))