

RESILIENT HOPE // Building & Belonging

When an incoming storm approaches, cows run away, which ultimately means they spend more time just absolutely miserable, suffering through the worst of the unavoidable storm. Buffalo, on the other hand, group together in a large herd, and instead of running away, they charge directly into the oncoming storm. They drastically shorten their exposure to the elements by running into the storm rather than running away from it.

In his first letter to the church, Peter is writing to Christians that were facing tremendous uncertainty and suffering. Their family members, friends, and neighbors were being martyred for their faith in Christ throughout the Roman Empire, so they scattered across the first century world.

And Peter is trying to instill in them a resilient hope that is able to withstand the storms they're facing, revealing that even though they've been exiled from their homeland, one day, Jesus Christ is coming back to bring them, and to bring us, into our true home where there is everlasting joy. Every wrong will be made right, every sad thing will come undone, every tear will be wiped away, every injustice will be dealt with to the fullest extent. God is coming back for His people.

Peter is pointing us to is a fixed reference point that not even death can touch. The hope of Christ's return gives us the strength, the power to face the storms of life. Not to run away, not to hide, not to just bide our time but to engage faithfully, courageously, and yet humbly in the world around us knowing that Christ did not come to condemn the world, but to save it.

Today, we have a passage that is absolutely crucial to understanding how we endure the uncertainty, sufferings, trials, and storms of life. What it actually looks like to persevere with that unwavering hope in our future as followers of Jesus.

Peter writes this...

1 Peter 2:4-10, "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. 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.' 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**,' and 'A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

This passage tells us three eternal truths that have enormous implications for our lives.

WHO HE IS

I grew up in the state of Pennsylvania, which is the keystone state. Pennsylvania was one of the original 13 colonies; There were six colonies to the north and six to the south. Pennsylvania was right in the middle and was considered the keystone state. Because a *keystone* is the central stone you need in order to build an arch. When you have a bunch of stones that you're turning into an arch, all the other stones are roughly the same kind of size and shape, and you pile them on each other.

But when you get to the top of the arch, you need an odd-shaped stone to fit in there in order to keep the arch stable. It has to be shaped wider at the top and narrow at the bottom, and it turns what you've been building into an actual, functional arch. The keystone is what gives stability and purpose to everything else around. Without it, everything else falls apart. The keystone is central. It's primary. It's the capstone. It's the crown of the arch.

Now, the interesting thing about this is that the other rocks, without the keystone, are useless. They're just rocks. But when all these other stones are in alignment with, dependent upon, leaning into the keystone, every rock finds its place and its purpose.

And the cornerstone is the same exact idea. Without it, the whole structure falls apart.

This passage gives us an analogy that says when we come into the church, we're like living stones. We are being built into a spiritual house, into the family of God, and Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. Through Him, everything is held together. And in Him, God makes a power available to us that turns us into a new kind of community with a purpose that is greater than anyone one of us on our own.

But one of the biggest challenges in western culture is that we are one of the most individualistic and isolated cultures throughout human history.

In fact, everything in our culture is aimed at getting us to believe that we should live for our own satisfaction, fulfillment, and significance regardless of what anyone else thinks or says about it. We should find out what we want and chase after it with all our time energy, attention, and money because that's the way to find meaning and significance in life.

The problem with this idea is that if the greatest cause we have in life is to be fulfilled and happy, and comfortable, we have nothing to live for except ourselves. And it's an utterly empty pursuit. When Jesus says in [Matthew 16](#), "If you seek to save your life you'll lose it." That's not a threat. It's an acknowledgement of reality. Living for yourself ends with inner emptiness and death.

Is there anything your life that you're willing to give yourself whole heartedly to? What are you willing to die for? To suffer for? Give me the list of things you will never compromise on. What do you really believe? What are your deepest convictions, and would you be willing to go to prison for those things? What cause do you hold to beyond yourself? What do you stand for? What are you about as a person? Because if you have no cause outside of yourself that you would die for, true courage, true heroism, and self-sacrifice will always be impossible.

And if we're living as if the purpose of life is centered on us, it's about our fulfillment, our satisfaction, our desires, our needs, our wants... no wonder we bail when things get too difficult for too long, or when we're just simply inconvenienced, because we say things like, "It's just not meeting my needs. I'm just not being fulfilled any longer." This happens in marriages, friendships, families, this happens in careers, and it happens in churches when our personal preferences are no longer met.

But what this analogy tells us is that fulfillment in life will never be found in trying to find fulfillment. The only way to find the fulfillment, the abundant life we're longing for, is to abandon ourselves for something bigger than ourselves. The centerpiece of our life has to be something beyond us.

In the person of Jesus, we see His arms spread wide on the cross in the ultimate posture of vulnerability and self-sacrifice while people are mocking Him, laughing at Him, spitting on Him. He didn't look down and say, "You know, this isn't worth it. I'm not being fulfilled anymore, I'm out of here."

The greatness of Jesus is seen in the reality that His cause was greater than His own life. Even though He is God in human flesh, the central focus of His life was not Himself, but He gave Himself for something beyond Himself. Jesus didn't live for His own fulfillment or even for His own salvation from suffering. He lived for our salvation. He gave up His life so that we might find abundant life in Him.

If we're ever going to find the abundant life He came to give us, we have to put all our trust, all our weight on the person of Jesus who is the cornerstone that holds all things together.

WHO WE ARE

1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a **chosen race**, a **royal priesthood**, a **holy nation**, a **people for his own possession**..."

Building your living on the foundation of Christ as the cornerstone... He is the centerpiece that gives everything else meaning, and purpose, and significance, and stability. It leads you into a new identity.

Many of us go through life wrestling with some measure of insecurity or anxiety about our place in the world. Am I enough? Am I good enough? Do I measure up?

In fact, everything on social media is setup to get you to compare your actual life with the façade of everyone else's life around you. It's not even real! And after doom scrolling for 30 minutes, we feel like trash because everyone else is having the time of their lives and we're just miserably scraping by, and it's not even real.

On the other hand, nearly every marketing campaign is designed to get you to believe that without this car, or that jewelry, or unless you live in that neighborhood, or have THAT house, or the latest technology, you're ok... but you're not quite enough. But can you imagine, if you had it...if you lived there? Then you'd be a somebody.

So, we go through life chasing empty and vain pursuits with these haunting questions driving us into the ground. Am I good enough? Strong enough? Smart enough? Pretty enough? Skinny enough? Fashionable enough? Do I fit in? Am I worthy of acceptance? Do I belong?

The American College Health Association has noted the rising anxiety in this generation of students entering college, and they say it's because the primary message children receive in life is that they better be the best at everything, or they won't amount to anything in life.

And our hearts are filled with lies that the devil is feeding to us, and we wake up every day, and lay our heads down at night with a discontentment, dissatisfaction, and an emptiness we can't seem to shake.

But Peter is writing to people who are being killed for their faith. People who have every reason to feel sorry for themselves and compare their lives to people who weren't suffering even close to the ways they were. And He tells them and us... no, you have to understand WHO YOU ARE.

You are (v. 9) a chosen race, you are a royal priesthood! You are a holy people welcomed, loved, cherished, and accepted by God Himself.

In Israel, there was a specially chosen line of royalty—the line of Judah, and a separate, specially chosen line of priests—the line of Levi. Peter says in Jesus, you are all of these. You are the chosen of the chosen of the chosen!

Then he says, a people for his possession. You are God's treasured possession! You belong to Him. In fact, you're royalty!

This doesn't mean you can walk around going, *"You can't treat me that way, I'm royalty. Don't you know who I am!?"* This isn't just feeling better about yourself. No, you're royalty because you belong to a King who laid down His life for you. Scripture tells us that to whom much is given, much is required. Becoming royalty changes who you are and how approach the world, but it also comes with an immense responsibility that is meant to be stewarded and managed with great care.

Hebrews 2:11-12, "So now Jesus and the ones He makes holy have the same Father. That is why **Jesus is not ashamed** to call them **His brothers and sisters**. For He said to God, 'I will proclaim your name to **my brothers and sisters**. I will praise you among your assembled people.'"

The author of Hebrews is quoting Psalm 22, a prophetic psalm where the Messiah calls us His own brothers and sisters. Born again into the family of God. That is who you are. This is who you belong to. Peter is reminding suffering, scared, and scattered

Christians, don't ever forget who you are. What possible dent could other people's opinions of you have when you belong to the King of Kings? And not only is He NOT ASHAMED of you, you are His prized possession. He adores you. You are His treasure!

The King of Kings has set his affection on you, and He has a plan for you. Friend, what more do you need to be "enough"?

And in light of that, Peter describes why we're here. God's plan, our purpose.

WHY WE'RE HERE

1 Peter 2:5, "...you yourselves like **living stones** are being **built up as a spiritual house**, to be a holy priesthood."

Ephesians 2:19-22, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

Paul and Peter are both saying the same thing. There are a lot of metaphors to understand the church, but this is what we see in these two passages.

God is the **builder**,
Jesus is the **cornerstone**,
We're **living stones**.

We're living stones. We are being built up into a holy temple, a dwelling place for the Spirit of God... where the glory of God is to be put on display!

God calls you a **LIVING STONE**! You have a significant role to play. You are meant to be a part of the whole, being built up together, being fashioned together by the master builder to make something beautiful, and powerful, and dangerous, and purposeful. On our own, we're just a rock. But you were created to be a part of a greater whole.

On our own, we're just a rock. But you put yourself in this great temple that the Master Builder is building, this great cosmic wonder called the Church, and you find meaning, purpose, significance.

Because God took you out of the quarry, and chiseled away your rough edges, and shaped you just right for a grander purpose. Beautiful, perfect, placed in the middle of all these other stones that compliment you and together leaning into and in alignment with Jesus Christ who is the cornerstone, we find strength and stability. That's the Church!

So, the question is are we a rock out there on our own or are we being built into a spiritual house?

In every local church, you have different levels of connection.

Because in every church, at the **CENTER** is Jesus because He is our Savior, King and our Senior Pastor. Around Jesus is the **CORE**. The core are those of you who have said "I'm all in," not only with Jesus, but with this local expression of the body of Christ. There are those who've been in this category for the last 26 years, and some for the last five, but you're all in with what God is doing in and through this church body.

Around the CORE is those that are **COMMITTED**. You love Jesus, you love the church, maybe you're connected in groups but not serving, or maybe you're serving but not in community.

Around the COMMITTED is the **CONGREGATION**. You love this place. You show up but you haven't quite crossed that line into connecting in community, or contributing, or serving in meaningful and impactful ways. Around CONGREGATION is the **CROWD**. You would also call this place home but it's a very casual, maybe occasional connection. Maybe you're here when you can be, but it's not a high priority for you.

And finally, there is the broader, outlying, **COMMUNITY**, those we want to bless, and serve, and care for with love, grace and truth so that they might one day experience the incredible joy of knowing and loving Jesus.

God is the master builder, Jesus is the cornerstone, and you are a living stone. Whatever your level of connection, our response today is to ask God about our next step in. To respond in prayer. ... how is God asking us to be built into His body? When

the storms of life come, are we built in? Are we connected? Are we a cow? Or a buffalo?