

Excerpts from Life-study of 1 Peter, Message 18

GROWTH IN LIFE AND ITS RESULT

Bible Verses

1 Pet. 2:5 You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

[1 Peter 2:5] says, “You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, into a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” In reading this verse we need to take care of grammar. Verse 4 is a modifier of the subject of the sentence in verse 5. The main part of the sentence in verse 5 is this: “You...are being built up a spiritual house.” Hence, the main thought here is that

of the building. This thought continues the thought in verse 2 of growing unto salvation. This means that following salvation we have the building. Growing unto salvation is for the building. This indicates that here salvation involves not only transformation, but also includes being built up. As a totality, salvation in 1 Peter 2 indicates transformation for building up.

In verse 5 Peter indicates that the believers are living stones. We, the believers in Christ, are living stones, like Christ, through regeneration and transformation. We were created of clay (Rom. 9:21). But at regeneration we received the seed of the divine life, which by its growth in us transforms us into living stones. At Peter's conversion the Lord gave him a new name, Peter—a stone (John 1:42). When Peter received the revelation concerning Christ, the Lord revealed further that He also was the rock—a stone (Matt. 16:16-18). Peter was impressed by these two incidents that both Christ and His believers are stones for God's building.

No doubt, these two incidents, the one recorded in John 1 and the other in Matthew 16, were deeply impressed into Peter's being. He could never forget those events. It must have been from these experiences

that Peter obtained the concept of living stones for the building of the spiritual house, which is the church. When Peter wrote this portion of 1 Peter, he wrote it according to the impression these events made upon him.

First Peter 2:5 says that we, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house. However, we all are clay. How can we be built up? In order to be built up a spiritual house, we need to become stones. But how can we actually become living stones? We become living stones by coming to Christ as the living stone (v. 4).

We may use petrified wood as an illustration of transformation. In Arizona there is a place called the petrified forest, an area that contains much petrified wood. Petrified wood is wood that has been changed into stone. Over a long period of time, water has been flowing over wood and through it. By means of this flow of water, the substance of the wood is changed into stone. On the one hand, the element of wood is carried away; on the other hand, the element of stone is brought in to replace the element of wood. In this way the wood becomes stone.

The principle is the same with our experience of transformation. If we long for the milk of the word, this milk will be like a current of living water flowing within us. As we stay in this flow, the current will carry away our natural substance and replace it with heavenly, divine minerals. These minerals are actually Christ. Gradually, over a period of time, we shall be transformed or “petrified”; that is, we shall become precious stones.

If we would be transformed, every day we need to come to the Lord as milk. We have pointed out that the way to come to Christ as the living stone is to drink the guileless milk of the word. This means that we come to Christ by drinking Him. As we daily drink in the milk of the word, we shall be transformed.

According to 2:5, as living stones we are being built up a spiritual house. Although the nourishing milk of the word is for the soul through the mind, it eventually nourishes our spirit. Instead of making us soulish, it makes us spiritual, suitable for building up a spiritual house for God.

God's goal in the believers is to have a house built up with living stones. He does not want separated and scattered stones, nor even a pile of stones merely

gathered together. He wants stones built up with one another.

The spiritual house into which we are being built is God's building. Eventually, this building will consummate in the New Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem there will not be any clay, for all the clay will have been transformed into precious stone. This means that the New Jerusalem is built with precious stones. We are becoming the precious stones that will be built up into the New Jerusalem. Hallelujah, the building work is now going on! How is this work going on? It is being carried out by the process of petrification, transformation. This happens as we daily, even hourly, come to Christ as milk and drink Him in. Then we shall have the flow, the current, that transforms us from clay into stone for God's building.

In 2:9 Peter goes on to say, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

The words "chosen race" indicate our source. As a chosen race, we have our source in God. We are also a royal priesthood. "Royal" denotes the status of our

priesthood, which is kingly, like that of Christ the King, our High Priest, typified by Melchisedec (Heb. 7:1-2, 25; Gen. 14:18). We are also a holy nation and a people for a possession. “Holy” denotes the nature of the nation. The Greek words rendered “a people for a possession” are an equivalent to a Hebrew expression. This is a reference to the Old Testament, and the Hebrew expression implies a particular treasure. We are God’s particular treasure, His special and precious possession. In Titus 2:14 Paul speaks of “a people for His own possession.” This also may be rendered “peculiar people.” This is an expression borrowed from the Old Testament (Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18), and it denotes a people privately possessed by God as His peculiar treasure (Exo. 19:5), His own possession. First we are a chosen race, then a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for a possession. As God’s particular treasure, we are His people who are precious to Him.

We are such a race, priesthood, nation, and people so that we may tell out the virtues of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. The Greek word rendered “tell out” also means proclaim abroad. First, we must be born anew and grow in life

and then be built up and serve corporately. Now we need to proclaim abroad, to tell out. To serve corporately is to satisfy God by offering up Christ as spiritual sacrifices; to proclaim abroad is to benefit others by showing forth the virtues of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, Peter and the other disciples saw His virtues. At least once, on the Mount of Transfiguration, they saw the Lord's glory. Seeing Christ's virtues was a daily occurrence. Whatever the Lord did was an excellent act full of virtue. Christ's excellencies are great in number. Every day the Lord Jesus manifested His virtues, and Peter saw this. Later, Peter wrote that we have been called by the Lord's virtue and glory. This indicates that Peter himself had been attracted by the virtue and glory of the Lord. Furthermore, he was called to this virtue and glory. Therefore, he is one with the Lord in virtue and in glory.

The apostles proclaimed the virtues of the Lord. They preached them, they taught them, and they announced them. Whatever the apostles preached and taught was a telling out of the virtues they had seen and enjoyed. It was a proclaiming abroad of the virtues in

which they had participated. This is what it means to tell out God's excellencies. Today we need to follow the apostles to tell out the excellent virtues of the Lord.

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Note: This version is not intended to be printed as material for pursuit during the small group gathering. Instead, it is to be used as additional reference for brothers and sisters who want to prepare in advance for fellowship on the message. We include here notes from the commentaries of the brothers in the life-study radio program. The points from these commentaries can help enrich our understanding and, eventually, our fellowship with the saints on the selected portions of the life-study message. We still recommend that, if possible, the saints still listen to the [audio message](#) in addition to reading the [life-study message](#) for personal pursuit and for preparation for small group gatherings. We also wish to point out that these notes have not been fully polished.

[Commentary]:

Introduction:

[CW:] The Bible, in both the Old Testament and New, tells us that man was formed of the dust of the ground, and that even as living creatures, we all are but clay in the hands of God. Yet the Apostle Peter, in his epistles, boldly declares that we have become living stones useful in building up God's house. Chapter 2, verse 5 of his first epistle says, You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Well I think we can all easily relate to being lumps of clay, but it may be more difficult for us to relate to being living stones, useful for God's building and precious. How is it that such a transformation from clay to precious stone is possible? Well Peter, in both his words and by the example of his own spiritual progress, gives us a marvelous pattern. Matt Miller has joined us for our fellowship. We're in chapter 2 of the book of 1 Peter. Wonderful portion, isn't it Matt?

[MM:] It really is, Chris. I feel blessed by the Lord to be here for this program today. It's a really good one. I'm looking forward to it.

CW: You know, we can't talk about this matter of Peter's writing and this metaphor that he uses referring to the believers as living stones against a backdrop of other portions in Scripture that tell us from our natural composition and constitution, we really amount to clay in God's eyes. So, to understand how this transition takes place, we really need to understand the origin of his spiritual experience, don't we?

[MM:] You know, Chris, I think it's really amazing that this revelation that we see with Peter that you mentioned about how he saw the believers as living stones and as we're going to see in today's program, those stones are for a purpose, they're for the spiritual house. And this revelation, we talked about it before the program today, is unique to Peter. No other writer gives such a clear word about the believers being stones for a spiritual house and the stones come through a process of transformation that you mentioned, that we start out as clay, but we end up as stones. There's a transformation implied there and we'll see more. I can't get into it in this introduction, but it's similar to Paul's experience. You know, Paul, he also had an initial revelation and we've talked a lot about that in past radio programs where he saw the Body of Christ, how the Lord came to him in Acts chapter 9 and said, "Who are you, Lord?" He said, "I am Jesus whom you persecute." So he got a vision from the day of his salvation that there's this, Jesus is there in the heavens, Paul is persecuting believers on the earth, and he saw the vision right then, immediately. The Head is in heaven, the members of the Body are on earth. And he talked about that through his ministry in the New Testament, the Body and the Head, the Body of Christ, we're all members. Peter influenced the same way, an initial revelation of the living stone and that became his ministry, especially here in 1 Peter chapter 2.

[CW:] That's really, an excellent comparison of the writings of Paul and Peter, how both their initial significant event associated with their receiving Christ so influenced them for all of their lives and their ministry and their writings. And each are able to bring into focus an aspect, not just of our salvation, but of God's purpose that is really marvelous. And, you know, Peter we're seeing so now complements Paul's writings. Of course, Paul had a greater volume of writing, but what Peter is adding in these two epistles really finishes the picture, doesn't it?

[MM:] It does. And it reminds me one time of a summary of someone gave of Witness Lee's whole ministry. Living Stream ministry can all be summarized in life and building.

[CW:] Yeah. Well, as we're going to see in this first portion of Witness Lee's sharing, two monumental events shaped Peter's perception and what he unveils to us in his epistles. One is the occasion that you're referring to takes place in John chapter 1 is the record. Verse 42, Peter has just been brought to the Lord and the Lord looking at him, Jesus said, "You are Simon, the son of John, you shall be called Cephas", which is interpreted Peter or a stone. That stuck with Peter, obviously, as he comes to his epistles. Then some two and a half years later in Matthew 16, this is the occasion where the Lord asks the disciples, they're all gathered, "Who do men say that I am?", and Peter has the great revelation that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And at this moment, the Lord turns to him and somewhat praises him for having this revelation. But then he completes the revelation with what he tells him in verse 16. And Simon Peter said with what he tells him in verse 17 and 18. In 16, Simon answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said to him, "You are Peter. And upon this rock, I will build My church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." So it's not enough for us just to realize who Christ is. We also need to have a realization of who we are, don't we, man?

[MM:] "You are Peter", which means you are a stone. "And upon this rock, I will build my church." That rock is really not Peter, as some falsely interpret. It's the revelation that Peter had, which is really the revelation of Christ as the son of the living God. Upon that revelation of Christ, he will build the church.

[CW:] So Peter realizes that Christ is the rock that the church is built on and the Lord points to him and says, you are Peter, a stone. And now Peter wants to impart that same revelation to all of us that realize that we also are now living stones for God's house.

[MM:] Very good.

[CW:] All right. Here's Witness Lee.

Part 1

[CW:] Matt, let's consider these two major events, significant events that really had to be major anchor points in Peter's life. He had a lot of ups and downs, didn't he? But it seems as the Lord had these two significant opportunities that he could always bring him back to that eventually became, as we've been talking, shaping influences in his ministry.

[MM:] You can see, Chris, Peter didn't write nearly as many chapters in the New Testament as the Apostle Paul did, but obviously this was a major part of Peter's writings. This is what he's talking about here in Chapter 2. I can't help but think of a comment a radio listener made one time. They said, I finally figured out what you guys do on the radio. You come on the radio and you explain what Witness Lee is going to say, and then after he says it, you talk about what he just said. I think here's a perfect example. We just finished talking about these two major landmarks in Peter's life, the initial contact with the Lord in John 1, and then in Matthew 16, again, two and a half years later, how those affected his whole ministry to see this matter of, Peter, "You're a stone." He was clay, but he had the vision. The Lord tells me I'm a stone. I'm going to eventually be a stone. And then he tells him again

after he has the revelation of Christ, "Peter, you're a stone." In other words, "And upon this rock, I'll build My church." That's the first mention in the Bible of the word church. This is a major revelation. And so here we are trying to take this massive revelation and reduce it into a short radio program. I just hope we can repeat it and repeat it until it becomes so simple that the listeners would get this simple point that is so profound.

[CW:] We talked about it in a program a couple of days ago that in just two verses preceding this sequence, Peter brings us to the matter of the milk of the word. And here the metaphor is very biological, botanical, as Bill Lawson said. And now without any kind of transition or bridge, he switches the metaphor to this matter of stone. So even this in the writing in chapter two implies the same transformation, doesn't it?

[MM:] It does. And I like the context. We're going to get into this more later, how it says "coming to him a living stone." You're talking about the word of God abiding forever at the end of chapter one. You're talking about longing for the guileless milk in the word as a newborn babe and growing unto salvation. So you've got growth, you've got milk, and it's related to the word. And then we talk about coming to him a living stone. And so you connect right away the stone to the milk and you're coming to him. These are not small words and they're not there by accident. This is very meaningful. And I personally have received a lot of light as I've been getting into this verses to prepare for this program. So I hope our listeners are staying with us and we can keep it simple enough for them that they really get the help to see what's going on here in Peter's writings.

[CW:] Yeah, I've been getting the same kind of help, Matt, and I think it's good that we repeat these concepts and these phrases until this light begins to really break upon all of us because it's revolutionary to our own Christian experience and our own Christian walk and the goal that we maybe have set. It's not for some kind of outward behavioral adjustment that God is looking for or some kind of following a pattern in an outward kind of way to mimic, but we're really talking about organic changes within our being, metabolical changes. There's a Greek word that's in the Bible that the English transliteration is metamorphosis, which really is the word for transformation. These are changes at the most elemental levels, aren't they?

[MM:] They are, Chris. And I'm going to do your job here for you. This is a good segue into this next section. I think we better go back to Witness Lee.

[CW:] Let's do it.

Part 2

[CW:] Well, he asks, have you got it, Matt?

[MM:] Chris, I'd like to ask the listeners the same question. I think I've got it, and I hope we can bring the listeners into it. This matter of petrified wood is a perfect example because you're taking something wooden, which we see from 1 Corinthians 3, that's not going to pass the test of the fire. Paul used the analogy there, fire will test every man's work, whether it's wood, hay, and stubble, or whether it's gold, silver, and precious stones. So you have some things that are precious that will go through the fire. Well, petrified wood will make it through the fire, but wood won't. So what's the difference? Well, it's the process of the minerals passing through the wood over long periods of time. And what a picture in 1 Peter 2, comparing it to the milk of the Word. When we come to Him and the Word, we come to the Word, and the Word is going through us day after day. We may think not that much about it. It may not be a big deal to us. Oh, I read the Bible for 15 minutes in the morning. I don't even remember what I read. Well, you might not remember, but you know what? Some milk got stuck into your being that's going to make you petrified, to make you become a stone for God's building. This is a miracle of transformation, to transform us, to change us. It's beyond mental comprehension. It's a reality. There's something real getting

deposited into us when we open to the Lord. We come to Him in the Word. Coming to Him, drinking the milk of the Word. It's really wonderful.

[CW:] It's not an accident, I don't think, Matt, that even the Greek root of the word Peter is the same Greek root from which we get the word petrification. It's "Peterification", I guess you could say. Of course, Witness Lee's accent there makes it a little hard to understand. I think he says "Peterification", meaning petrification. But the principle is really consistent throughout this whole development, isn't it?

[MM:] We need a lot more than a half an hour radio program to cover this in a proper way. I just hope the listeners could get the life study message and get into this more. All we can do is really use our index finger and point.

[CW:] All right, let's go back to Witness Lee to our final section. I want to pick up another verse now in chapter 2, verse 9. It says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood..." Now we're talking about, obviously, the result of transformation. "...A holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." And in Peter's 2nd epistle, chapter 1, verse 3, similar language, seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue. Let's look into these virtues, these excellent virtues of God in this coming portion.

Part 3

[CW:] Matt, I'd like a couple of things in this section. Let me kind of cover one of them real quick. And then hand you the ball for the second. The obvious one, the easy one is, here was Peter with the Lord. And he was able first hand to witness these excellent virtues being lived out day by day by day. And there was a real attraction that took place. And Peter obviously caused him to leave his former life. And really follow the Lord in such a way. But the part of this section that I'd like you to talk about more. Is even how those virtues and those attributes eventually impact us. To where we change in how attractive we are even in God's eyes.

[MM:] You know Chris, it's not something that you can try to do. It's something that comes out of enjoying the milk. You enjoy the Lord and then as a result of that. It says in verse 9, "You're a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession. So that you may tell out the virtues of Him, Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." And I think it's easy for us to realize in our personal experience. How we've been affected personally by seeing the virtues in others. When Christ is expressed through others that affects me. It's the old saying, I can't hear what you're saying. Because what you're doing speaks so loud. In other words, what you tell out is a virtue. That's going to speak louder than anything you can say. That's what he's talking about here. It kind of reminds me of what Paul said in Galatians 2.20, "It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." When Christ is living through us. The virtues of Christ are coming out through us. And it's no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us. We can't take any glory for it. We don't get the credit for it. Christ gets the credit. "Unto Him be the glory in the church", was Paul's words in Ephesians 3. You know, he points out here. One of these excellent virtues in Christ is that God loves us even as sinners. Even before we're regenerated, He loved us.

[CW:] You know, John 3.16. But in the same context where Peter's talking about this process of transformation. That we've all been called into. Ultimately, we become this particular treasure. Something that God views not just as an object of love. But something that He treasures. This really implies that His excellent virtues begin to get wrought into us. That's, I think, what you're saying, isn't it?

[MM:] Exactly. It's a masterpiece. One brother shared one time that it's a miracle how God can create this masterpiece out of damaged merchandise.

[CW:] That's right.

[MM:] We're all damaged. We all are failures. We're all miserable. We need the mercy of the Lord to the uttermost. And yet the Lord would pick us to create a masterpiece out of us. To tell out His virtues. And He can only do this when we come to Him. And long for the guileless milk of the Word.

[CW:] Boy, as you said, Matt, so appropriately. It really leaves glory and the credit all in God's realm. He let Satan do all he could. And then he comes in with the residue, really. And produces this incredible masterpiece. Well, we're out of time, Matt. But I've enjoyed our time together. You're off for a couple of weeks and a trip to Asia. Join us as soon as you're back, I hope.

[MM:] Thanks, Chris.

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