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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**May 20, 2018**

**Growing a Priestly Attitude**

**1 Peter 2:1-8**

**Prayer:** *Father, we just again thank you for your grace and your goodness. We just again thank you for the privilege that we have to gather here as we do each week. And again, Lord, as I pray each week, I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, continue to guide us, come alongside us, give us the ability to open up your word and to make it make sense and to make it of permanent value, we pray this Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we are continuing our study of 1 Peter and if you were here last week, one of the things that stood out about the passage we looked at last week is that Peter commands us and he commands us attitudinally. 1 Peter 2 says this, it says: *Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

Well, we pointed out that craving God's word starts with an

attitude and we recognize that it is God's word that opens our hearts to sins that we often hide. And we recognize the importance of exposing ourselves over and over again to God's way of thinking, God's way of acting, God's way to responding so that we can be shaped, that we can be molded into the image of Jesus Christ. And so now this week we're going to find out why as Peter continues to unfold the truth for us in our next portion of scripture. This is verse 4. Peter says: *As you come to him, the living Stone -- rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him -- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* God is saying that we are the new temple of God but both figuratively and literally. See, as believers in God we have God himself living inside us and so we are the ones who become the very living stones that God is going to use to build his temple.

Peter goes on to describe God's building project in verse 6, he says: *For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."* Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, *"The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" and, "A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble*

*because they disobey the message -- which is also what they were destined for.* Well, Peter's speaking about a building right here and this building contains very distinct stones, three different types of stones. There's first the living stones, which is us believers; there's the cornerstone, which is Jesus Christ himself; and then there is the stumbling stone, which is Christ but in this case it's Christ rejected.

So we have a living stone, a cornerstone, and a stumbling stone and so I want to look this morning as to how they function. And Peter speaks first of a spiritual house built out from a precious cornerstone made up of living stones, and together these stones make up a spiritual temple in which spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ are offered. Now if you peel back a little bit and you look at this, you think for a second, say okay, here's Peter, this unsophisticated fisherman and he's laying out here in this paragraph symbolically our whole reason for existence. I mean this is God's answer to the question: What am I here for? What am I doing here? You know by now, many of us know the answer to the Westminster Catechism question which is: What is the chief end of man? Well, it is as you probably know to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Peter's just laying this out symbolically for us, he's showing us symbolically how that works. He says: *As you come to him, the living Stone -- rejected by humans but chosen by*

*God and precious to him -- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Peter is painting a picture of a temple. It's a living temple and it's so vastly different from an earthly temple it's kind of easy to miss. You know Solomon's temple in the Old Testament, it stood as the focal point of God's presence in Israel, it was magnificent, and it stood for centuries and it stood as a mere picture of the temple that God is building right now. This is a temple far more glorious than the one that Solomon built because the materials that God uses are far superior than the ones that were available to Solomon. I mean Solomon only had gold, he had silver, he had bronze, wood, and marble. And no matter how wonderfully they were used, they were still just the products of mere men and that was a problem. Acts 7:47 says of God: *But it was Solomon who built a house for him. Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says, "'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, for what is the place of my rest?'"* God asked the question what kind of house could you build for me? And just a glimpse of the heaven gives us a hint of the problem that we have when we ponder building a house for God.*

You know, we live in the Milky Way galaxy in one tiny little

section of it. In this tiny little section is a tiny little solar system spinning around a pretty average star. And 93 million miles away from that star that we call the sun is this little planet called earth. Well, you know, eons ago man recognized how magnificent the heavens were and back then, even back then he gave God the glory he deserved for them. This is what the psalmist said in Psalm 8. He says: *Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the Son of Man that you care for him?* Now, the psalmist really had no idea how majestic the heavens really were. Awhile back I pointed out some facts about our Milky Way galaxy, and I said it's such that if you traveled 160 billion miles every single day -- that's how long a light year is -- if you did that every single day, 160 billion miles, it would take you 100,000 years to get from one end of the Milky Way to the other. And in that galaxy alone you would find approximately one thousand million stars. Now if you wanted to travel to the next galaxy, that would be a trip going 160 billion miles a day, that would take you 2.2 million years. I mean that's how long it would take to get from Milky Way galaxy to the Andromeda galaxy. Ten years ago I asked the question how many galaxies are there in the universe and the answer back then was somewhere between 200 to 500 million galaxies. Well, I

just rechecked and the answer as of six months ago is now 2 trillion. And we all know that these galaxies were flung into existence by the divine fiat of God's spoken word. And so think about it. We're going to somehow or other make a house for him on earth? I mean what kind of architecture could ever be used to house the living God? I mean how could we humans in our wildest imagination ever think we can accommodate the creator of the universe whose throne is heaven itself?

Well it turns out that there is a type of architecture that God loves to dwell in. It's a dwelling made up of what God calls "living stones." As Edmund Clowney puts it, he says: God's architecture is biological. His house grows as new stones are added, but also as the stones in place are perfected. 'The living stones,' as Paul says, grow into a holy temple of the Lord." See, God's master plan is to construct a temple fit for him to dwell in and the stones for that temple are no ordinary stones, because God's architecture is biological. The stones are the redeemed lives of his children. It is those stones that are fitted into a structure, shaped and organized around a cornerstone, a chief cornerstone who is Jesus Christ. And the structure is much more than a clever metaphor for how God works because living stones are real people, and the real house that they build is the church. I mean Paul says the very same thing not in Peter's epistle but in

his epistle to the Ephesians. In *Ephesians 2* it says this, it says: *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but we 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.* I can't over emphasize here how important the church is to God. What God is saying is I live inside a building made up of human beings. And when you think about it, that really is what defines our lives. You know it's very easy to think that we are here for ourselves but God says no, no, you're here to do something very specific. You are here to build a temple for me. See, our lives are not really defined by what we think is important, things like career or family and relationships, what really gives our lives meaning is actually defined by how we fit things like career, family, and relationship into his building plan. God builds his temple out of living stones chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to bear his image.

And that leads to the second part of the temple that God is building and that's this thing called the "cornerstone." See, we are joined and fitted with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone and this cornerstone has three functions. Number one, the

cornerstone shapes and it defines the building; number two, the cornerstone links and connects all the other stones in a complete unity; and thirdly, it's the cornerstone that gives meaning to the structure, it gives meaning to life. Well first the cornerstone shapes and defines the building. You know Wikipedia defines "cornerstone" by saying: "The cornerstone concept is derived from the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation, important since all other stones will be set in reference to the stone, thus determining the position of the entire edifice." In other words the cornerstone is the reference point for the entire building. The cornerstone is crucial because it determines whether or not the whole building is going to be right and true and sound. And the reason why the cornerstone is so critical is because if it's true, the entire building's going to be true and if it's not, well, neither will the building be so. That's exactly what Jesus Christ is to us. You see, he's not only our perfect reference point but for us, he's also the source of our perfection. See, our worthiness as living stones has nothing to do with our innate value or our innate goodness because we don't have any before God. God's goodness is perfection. Our goodness is relative. I mean I might be considerably "gooder" than Hitler and "badder" than Mother Teresa, but in the end all such goodness falls short of God's glory. Here's the amazing thing, God holds us responsible for that. God says in *Romans 3:23*: *For all have sinned and fall short*

*of the glory of God.* And then God says in verse 12: *All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.* Well you hear that and say, wait a minute, if we're worthless living stones, how in the world are you going to make a building fit for God to live in? Well the answer is found in the cornerstone. See, each of us is shaped and defined by our connection to the chief cornerstone no matter where we fit in the building. And Jesus alone imparts worthiness to each of us living stones by virtue of imputed righteousness. I know that's a fifty-cent word, but it's important to understand it. I mean do you know what "imputed righteousness" means? Do you know what it is? It's righteousness by association. Make no mistake about it, God sees us as righteous not by our fitness to be counted as living stones, not by what we do but by what Jesus Christ did on the cross. See, by paying the penalty for my sins, Jesus has made me righteous by imputation. I think I need to unpack that just a little bit. Let me give you an example.

Some of you may know that I am, for better or for worse, a fan of the New York football Giants. Some of you also may know that that can be a very difficult thing because sometimes they're very good, sometimes they are truly awful. And my kids are Giant fans as well. So frequently they'll give me a call to cheer on how they're doing or to commiserate if they're not doing well. And when we

lose, I say things like, "We stunk." And when we win, I may say something like, "Oh, we totally dominated them." Well there's a very strange pronoun in that sentence, it's the pronoun "we". I mean any observer could certainly ask the question what do you mean by the word "we?" I mean, did you put on any pads? Did you put on a helmet? Did you make any tackles? Did you make any catches? Were you even there? Well the answer to that would, of course, be no. See it's the players who win or lose the game. But we don't say, "Yay, the players won the game!" We say, "We won the game." See somehow I personally claim victory as if I did it myself even though I was nowhere near the playing field. When I can say "we won" or "we lost," I'm speaking of imputation. The players do the labor, I claim the credit or take the blame. And on a much more serious note it is imputation that makes all of us unfit before God. You see, we share the guilt of Adam's fall again through this fifty-cent word "imputation." When Adam fell in the Garden of Eden, I was nowhere near that place. I mean I never saw the fruit, I never touched it, I never ate it. But I'm no less guilty than Adam because he represents me. I mean in a generic sense athletes represent a school or a city and to the extent that you identify with them, they represent you. When the New York Giants lose, New York loses, to some extent as a New Yorker, I lose as well. The difference is when my football representatives fail, we just lose a game, it's no big deal. When Adam fell, it was the biggest and the

worse deal mankind ever experienced because Adam was in fact you and me. When Adam fell, we fell with him. That's why we say in Adam's fall we sinned all. And God says in *Romans 5*, he says: *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, (Adam) and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.* Now you might say well, that's not fair that I'm considered guilty for something somebody else did. I mean I didn't eat that fruit, so why am I being blamed for it? Well, first you have to understand that the person who's been chosen as your representative, that is Adam, well, he was unlike anybody that you and I have ever met or will ever meet in our entire lifetime. You see, Adam was perfect. Up until the time he fell, Adam was flawless, and you and I have no idea what that must have been like. You see before Adam fell he had no sin and no predilection toward sin like you and I are born with. Adam didn't have that. Adam freely chose in a way we cannot even imagine because we've never experienced that kind of freedom. Adam freely chose to rebel against God. So if you're going to complain about the unfairness of your representation, understand God gave us in Adam a perfect representative. Never in the history of humankind has there ever been another flawless person with the exception of Jesus, the one other flawless person who had to come to rescue us. Adam got us into this mess by imputing his rebellion to all of us. And if you insist that it's unfair that I'm held responsible for Adam's sin,

you have to understand it's the exact same process, that is to say imputation that makes us also fit for heaven. God says in *Romans 5:17*: *For if, because of one man's trespass -- again, that was Adam -- death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.* You see, by God's grace we have another perfect representative, one who did not fail and once again it was by imputation. Jesus Christ became the guilty one. Even though he was 100 percent innocent, he took on my guilt again by imputation. He didn't do the crime but he bore the penalty. And when Jesus Christ paid for my guilt and all of my sins on the cross and I place my faith in him as my savior, I become righteous even though I was 2,000 years and ten thousand miles from calvary. I became righteous by imputation. Christ did it but I had it reckoned to my account by faith. Adam made us all guilty, by imputation Christ makes all of us who trust in him righteous by imputation. Have I said imputation enough? Okay. Let me just add that it is through imputation that Jesus as our cornerstone shapes and defines this building we're talking about. You see, he shapes and defines his fallen, sinful sheep by faith now into perfect living stones.

Now the second thing that the cornerstone does is it links and it connects all the other stones into a complete unity. So we ask, okay, what is the unity that brings all of us together? Why are we being shaped into these living stones? Well, it's in the text this morning. This is *2 Peter 2:5*. He says: *You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house -- here it comes -- to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* Let me take away from this religious sounding language to make this as practical as possible. First of all we talk about a priest. A priest represents a mediator between God and man. God says flat out if you're a member of my kingdom, you are a priest. Every one of us got here through the ministry of a priest, whether that priest was a man or a woman a boy or a girl, they either spoke, wrote or somehow communicated to us that we were lost and that God alone had the power to find us. Now for some of us the priest was mom or dad, for others it was a friend or a relative, a boss, an employee, somebody. See, the priest represents God to the world. And that's the role that God has carved out to every single one of his people. So you have to ask yourself do you see yourself as the priest that God intended you to be? Do you see all of your friends and acquaintances as lost and desperately needing Christ? I'm not speaking here about some kind of hand-fisted evangelism where the final goal is to leave somebody with a tract sticking out of their jacket pocket.

I'm speaking first and foremost of what Peter is speaking about and that's attitude. See the real heart of a priest aches with the darkness that this whole world is walking in. He or she knows in their heart of hearts that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through him. See a priest carries the burden of knowing God attitudinally. He seeks to share what he knows wherever he goes and whatever he does. The priest also offers spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. Now does that mean he's supposed to wear a linen ephod and use all of the Old Testament requirements in order to make these sacrifices? Well that's not what God is looking for. God says in *Romans 12:1*: *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* What God is saying is all I want is you. You know, the Message is another translation of the Bible, it's a paraphrase but it does an excellent job of *Romans 12* right here. Here's how they translate *Romans 12:1*. God's saying: *So here's what I want you to do: God helping you, take your every day ordinary life, your sleeping, eating, going to work, and walking around life and place it before God as an offering.* See God is looking for your body offered up as a living sacrifice. It means that God wants a living, breathing you. He wants you to give your life to his glory. And God's glory is nothing more than God's character and God's attributes on display. What he's saying is

you're the billboards, you are the sign posts, you are what I'm using to display who I am and what I do, my character and my attributes. God wants our lives to be living displays of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control which you may know is the fruit of the Spirit. God says he is the vine -- Jesus says he is the vine, we are the branches. We display what the Spirit is doing as he is flowing through us. That's what the spiritual sacrifice is. 1 Peter again says: *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.* You see, God's Spirit is at the root of our transformed lives, and like a root, you don't see the root, it's underground, it's hidden but its effects should be anything but hidden and its fruit should be everything but hidden. It should hang like real fruit does from our lives. You know, I've often said Christians should be the loveliest people on earth. And so spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God is nothing more than a life lived with God at the center. And seeing everything that we do, from teaching, to homemaking, to carpentry, to landscaping, to being a cop or a doctor or lawyer or whatever, is seeing each of these as ministry, each of these as sacred as anything else. See, it's each of us seeing ourselves as the priest that God intends us to be. And Jesus the cornerstone links and connects all the living stones around one complete

unifying theme and that theme Paul states in *1 Corinthians 10:31*. He says: *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.* See that's really the whole point of being a living stone, I mean, first Jesus shapes my life through his imputed righteousness; secondly, he connects all of our lives by aiming them at his glory, and finally, the cornerstone gives meaning to my life. I mean God tells us through Peter's text that we are here for the primary purpose of being a living temple made out of living stones where we offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ who happens to be our temple's cornerstone. What he's saying here, it's not that life gets in the way of offering spiritual sacrifices, it's that life itself is the way of offering spiritual sacrifices, how we parent, how we study, how we work, how we love, how we give, even how we fight, they're all part of the spiritual sacrifices that we offer to God daily. I mean I wish I could communicate to you how critical it is to understand this. You know, part of parenting is walking your kids through each phase of their lives when they're convinced that their lives will become meaningless if they don't get a bicycle or if it they don't make a sports team or if they don't get a license on their first three, four, five, six attempts. We tell them this, too, shall pass. And we tell them that because we know that there's more important things on the horizon. But folks, there is no more important horizon than a God-centered life.

Our job as parents is communicating the truth that most of life is absolutely meaningless if it is lived out divorced from the only thing that gives it meaning.

Just to go back for a second to football, and I've mentioned this before but it's such a perfect illustration. I mentioned Tom Brady before, I mean, he is our perfect example. He's the quarterback of the New England Patriots, the most successful football team in history, a multi, multi millionaire, he's got movie star looks, he's married to one of the most beautiful women in the world and you know that every single male in the world thinks, oh, if I could just be Tom Brady, I'd have the greatest life I could possibly imagine. The only one who doesn't quite see it that way is the one who's living that life, it's Tom Brady. And I mentioned before he was interviewed on *60 Minutes* shortly after he had won his third championship, his third Super Bowl and his response to winning that third Super Bowl was, he said, "There's got to be something more than this." And when a reporter asked him what he thought it might be, he looked wistfully, he said, "God, I wish I knew." Tom, I know.

*1 Peter says: 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. See, God isn't*

suggesting a nice spiritual way of thinking here. He's telling us in no uncertain terms that the ultimate reality of life itself is spiritual sacrifices offered in the temple of living stones. Now it's a new paradigm, it's a new paradigm for born again believers and God is using spiritual words to convey what we mean by that paradigm. And what he's saying is what is the lens that you look at your life through? God is either at the center of that lens or he's some vague, nagging religious obligation you seek to meet by showing up at church every week. God does not build living temples out of church attendance. I mean we all want to live lives that matter, but we have to ask ourselves a far more important two-word question, and that is: To whom? The answer is: To God. I mean if you get focused there, everything else in your life will come into focus. I just think of myself when I come into this pulpit and my default drive is to matter to people, I'm going to find myself trying to be articulate and witty and clever and I'll be focused on me. But when I seek to focus on mattering to God, I stop caring about that, and God is freed up to make all of the difference and that's true for all of us. Jesus said in *Matthew 6:33*: "*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*" And he was talking about all the things that we care about: What am I going to eat? Where am I going to live? What am I going to wear? See, lives built on mattering to career, to friends and even to family are

ultimately going to prove meaningless without God. And who's going to give a fig what kind of a life you've lived 500 years from now? There's only one who can, and he does care, and he cares eternally. See, God is insisting for our own sakes that his children live God-centered lives. And the vast majority of the world doesn't even get it. Peter says in *1 Peter 2:6*: *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."* Then he goes on to say: *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.*

Well, we've seen living stones and we've seen the cornerstone, finally we are about to encounter the stumbling stone. Now to we who believe, this stone is absolutely precious. To those who do not believe, the stone will become a crushing stumbling block that will leave them forever guilty. You see it's not our belief that gives the cornerstone its significance, it's Jesus' flawless perfection that gives him the right to be that cornerstone, to be that judge. You see all of mankind will be judged in relation to that cornerstone. We will either see our connection to it or we will reject that cornerstone and it will crush us as a stumbling

stone. You want to say isn't that a little harsh, isn't that a little judgmental? The answer is, yeah, it is. The question isn't is it harsh or judgmental, the question is: Is it true? I know in my life, this is what motivates me to want to share the gospel with every single person I meet. And understand, it's not just pagans who stumble here, it's folks who have been fooled into thinking they are Christians when they are not who stumble. And I can easily see false believers tripping and stumbling over that stone. After all, it's hard to grasp the big picture here. I mean how can God judge people for not seeing that all of life is worship and all that matters is being a living stone in God's temple, I mean, isn't that just for kind of religious types? Well, if we think like that it just might be because we've also bought into the world's paradigm, that God isn't really entitled to that level of worship.

Jesus just happened to tell a story about that in *Luke 14*. This is the story that he told. He says: *But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I bought a field and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and*

therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'" Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and he said to them, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." This is a story designed to give us insight as to how God is seeing us and the sacrifice we will or will not give. And right there in the story God lays out the big three. J. Vernon McGee points out: The three major reasons why God is not number one in our lives, and it might just be because we're not believers. You know the big three, the big three reasons start at: Number one: "I bought a field." In other words, it's possessions that stop me. Or number two: I have to try out my oxen. It's my job or my career that stops me. Or number three: I just got married. No, it's my family that stops me. Well if you think God is moved by those excuses, consider what

he says in verse 26. Again: *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."* God is playing for keeps.

Our text this morning is one more reason why we stumble over the stone. Again, *1 Peter*, he says: *They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.* Well, God says some were destined to stumble. I mean is it therefore not their fault? I mean it's just their destiny, so how can God find fault with them? Let me give you an analogy here. I got this many years ago. I was on a plane watching the in-flight movie, it was -- the title of the movie was *Ratatouille*. I don't know if you've ever seen that movie. It was a cute cartoon about a rat who becomes a world class chef. It was an interesting premise making a rat a protagonist hero, and it's an interesting premise because rats are universally loathed, and the movie made use of that. Now I absolutely detest rats, but you could ask me, you can say to me, okay, why? I mean, they didn't ask to be sneaky, filthy, disease-filled creatures of the night, did they? I mean isn't that just their nature? Aren't they just the fulfilling "what they were destined for?" I mean they can't help themselves. But that doesn't make them any less repulsive. Well, what is man's nature? God says man is a rebellious, disobedient, hate-filled creature who by nature

despises the one who created him. We find that offensive. But it's true. After all, we are the creatures who, when given the opportunity, tortured and executed the perfect God man who came to live among us. It wasn't Rome or the Jews who slaughtered Christ, it was us. If you recall, we are the creatures who rejected the cornerstone. That was our destiny. The logical rational response by God should have been the same as mine towards rats: destroy them and their wretched natures altogether. Instead God's reaction to our fallen nature is redemption, it's grace. See, every one of us was destined for disobedience, every one of us was destined to stumble on the cornerstone, but God in his grace opened our eyes and he changed our hearts, and instead of being enemies he made us adopted sons and daughters. But it didn't stop there. Our text this morning ends with verse 9 and 10 which tells us why God chose us. It says: *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession -- and here it comes -- 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.*

So what does it mean to be a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God? Well, what God is saying here is I have blessed you so that you could bless others. It

means we have the greatest privilege ever bestowed on human beings, you and I have been chosen by God to be priests, intermediaries between God and man. We are living stones in a living temple in a spiritual house in which Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. You know, from day one God has been at work carving out for us a separate reality vastly different from the present reality that dominates our senses. And as I've said, it's far grander than we can imagine and we often miss it because in God's economy the first is going to be last, the humble are exalted, and the head is the chief servant. In this economy success often looks like failure. I've met many people who are or will be big shots in heaven. I mean there's no surprise almost to a person, they're little people here on earth. That's how the kingdom operates. You see, the grand illusion is that success in this world is what's supposed to really matter. It's thinking that this world, this life, this earthly kingdom has substance and permanence; it has neither. What matters is the glory of God. And it's amazing that everything we do comes around to whether or not we are willing to glorify God. Our purpose as priests is to declare the glory of him who called us out of darkness, and declaring that glory is the reason why we exist. The reason why God's living temple is so much greater than Solomon's is because it's made out of materials that are precious to God and we are those materials. You also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering

spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Most of the world is never going to get this. And it is the answer to the question: Why am I here? And it also explains why Peter says in *1 Peter 2:2*: *Like newborn babes, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.* Because like I said at the beginning of this message, this is all about attitude. See, crave the milk of the word and God will grow you up to crave the meat of the word and the bread of life which is Christ himself and you will then grow into a living stone in God's temple and you will put into practice what the psalmist says in *Psalm 89*. He says this: *Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, LORD. They rejoice in your name all day long; they celebrate your righteousness. For you are their glory and strength. Let's pray.*

*Father, we do celebrate your righteousness, we do rejoice in your name all day long. You are our glory and our strength and we thank you and praise you for the privilege of making us priests, calling us out of the darkness, for the task of proclaiming to that same darkness who you are. Give us the grace, the strength, the peace, the power, and the wisdom to do just that, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*