

A People Built by Mercy – Part 1

1 Peter 2:4-10 - NCBC, May 6, 2018

Main Point: **Believers are blessed to be united with Jesus.**

- **Sharing His Distinction** (4)
 - Rejected by Men
 - Chosen by God
- **Sharing His Life** (5-6)
 - For growing communion
 - For growing worship
- **Sharing His Honor** (6-8)
 - Rejection grows shame, stumbling, and offense
 - Faith grows honor, obedience, and praise
- **Sharing His Mercy** (9-10)
 - Given a new identity
 - Given a new purpose

Application: **Don't lose heart – remember you are God's people!**

Opening Announcements:

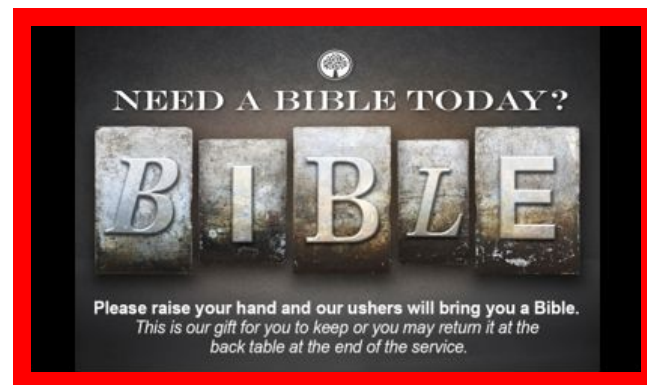
- COCUSA Camp @ NCBC June 4-8, 7:30am-5:30pm
- Baptisms – 2nd service

<<All to Us>>



God is everything to us – he's our cornerstone, and our sure foundation. He's our future, and our hope. He's our strength even now as we gather to proclaim His glory this morning.

Please open your Bible to **1 Peter chapter 2** as we continue our worship together.



If you don't have a Bible with you, simply raise your hand and we'd be delighted to give you one. You are welcome to take this Bible home as our gift to you, or just return it

after our service by placing it on the table in the back of the room. **1 Peter chapter 2** is on page 1203 in the giveaway Bibles today.

I'm so thankful for how God has blessed our church family in recent days with answered prayers. Thursday evening was a sweet hour of prayer together with the larger family of God at First Mennonite Church in Morton. Rejoicing how God aligned our hearts to His Word through our prayer time together.

And still blessed for all God did last weekend here. Pastor Darren Wiebe was such an encouragement. And to be able to install a new deacon into spiritual leadership just one week after ordaining Pastor Scott as an elder – God has clearly been more than kind to us church.



Therefore, with thankful hearts, I'd invite you to stand in honor of the reading of God's Word as I read from **1 Peter chapter 2**, starting in **verse 4**. I'm reading from the **English Standard Translation**,

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.

⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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 is good news from God. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

God's people purposefully immerse themselves in God's Word, since we learned last week from the first three verses of **1 Peter chapter 2** that we grow spiritually by tasting God's goodness in the pure spiritual milk of His Word. Only God's gospel can cure hopeless selfishness.

So in our efforts to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly,¹ we frame Scripture and hang verses around our homes. We use Bible verses as screen-savers, we stitch verses on pillows, and even enjoy biblical promises on our coffee mugs, or on the bottom of our fast-food cups in some establishments! And this is all right and good...*as long as we remember the context of these verses for their meaning.* For as Dr. John Street taught me in seminary, "A text without its context is a pretext for a proof text."

For example, suppose you woke up one morning hungry for an omelet. As you open the egg carton,



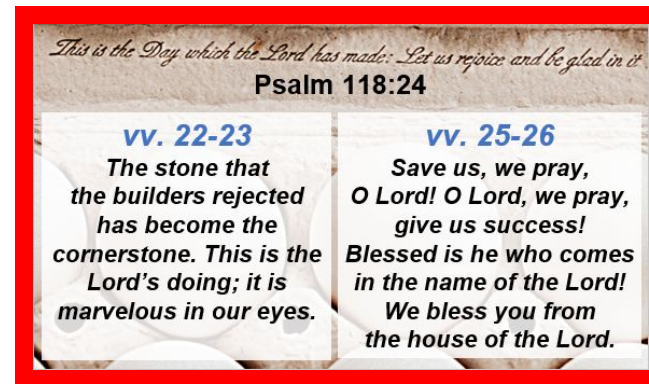
you're pleasantly greeted with **Psalm 118, verse 24**.

¹ Colossians 3:16
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This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Now apart from its context, you might think God is calling you to rejoice and be glad in today – since spring has arrived, the sun is shining, and you're getting good protein for breakfast! But while it is true that every day is a gift from our Lord,² is **Psalm 118** really telling us to rejoice and be glad because of today?

To answer, look at the surrounding context:



The two verses immediately before our "egg-cellent" verse say,

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

Jesus quoted **verses 22-23** in the Gospel accounts, after telling the parable of the wicked tenants who finally killed

² Psalm 139:16; c.f. Ecclesiastes 9:9

the master's son to steal the vineyard. Jesus taught clearly that He Himself was the stone that the Jewish leaders had rejected.³ And making the rejected Christ the cornerstone of salvation was in fact the Lord's sovereign doing! **Verses 22-23** therefore proclaim how marvelous and precious it is that God Himself caused Jesus to be murdered,⁴ only then to raise Him to newness of life as the cornerstone, or foundational head of the church!

Likewise, **verses 25-26** are quoted frequently during Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem 1 week before the cross.⁵ You will recognize the first words of **verse 25** as "Hosanna!" – which literally translates,

Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Verses 25-26 also picture the day when God's Messiah saves His people. When the crowds shouted these verses during Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, they had no idea that God would answer their prayers the next week by hanging Jesus on the cross – truly delivering them from sin's power in a way that pride could only reject.

Therefore the context on both sides of *This is the Day which the Lord has made* helps us understand that the Psalmist is not speaking of today in **verse 24**. Instead this verse is referring to the day with a capital "D" – the

³ Matthew 21:42-44; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17; c.f. Ephesians 2:20

⁴ Acts 4:27-28; c.f. 2:23; 4:11; Isaiah 53:10; Matthew 16:21; Luke 22:22

⁵ Matthew 21:9 (c.f. 23:39); Mark 11:9-10; Luke 19:38 (c.f. 13:35); John 12:13

historical day of our salvation when Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins, and rose from the dead to grant eternal life to all who believe in Him! What happened on that day is cause for rejoicing and gladness!

Psalm 118:24 calls you to rejoice and be glad in the Day when Jesus became the foundational cornerstone of the church – that Day when Jesus died for your sins, and rose again so you could experience the blessings of living forever in God's house!

Now why start our sermon today with this study of **Psalm 118**? Well first, I want to strengthen your understanding of this familiar verse – so that in the future whenever you see **Psalm 118:24**, you will recognize it as the joyful Gospel message that it truly is!!

But most importantly, we start in **Psalm 118** this morning because Peter takes us there in **chapter 2** of his letter to troubled hearts.



Peter started his letter with a robust survey of how God's true grace secures a firm hope for believers in Christ. In

chapter 1 verse 3, Peter praises God for His great mercy that caused us to be born again to a *living* hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In **verse 13** Peter looks forward to the future grace that is ours upon Jesus' return, and thereby calls us to live differently from this world in **verse 14-17**, loving one another with a supernatural and enduring love in **verse 22-25**.

Last week the first 3 verses of **chapter 2** provoked a greater hunger and thirst for God's grace as revealed to us through the pure spiritual milk of His Gospel. Just like physical babies grow by drinking their mother's milk, so likewise spiritual life and growth will only be sustained by our diet of God's *living* and abiding Word.

So now in **verse 4**, Peter continues,

As you come to Him... meaning *as you draw near to God* through His Word. This phrase is not speaking of our initial coming to Christ in salvation, as much as it is our drawing near to Christ continually for communion and for spiritual intimacy and nourishment. Peter is continuing his previous thought here, so we might expect him to say... *as you come to Him* to drink deeply and quench your thirst!

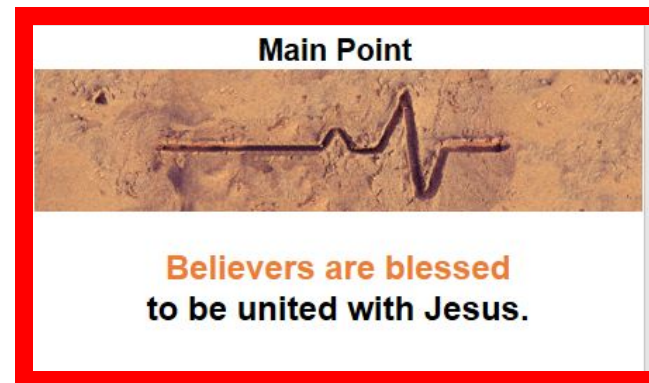
But that's not what Peter says here is it? Peter changes the metaphor. From spiritual milk to spiritual stones. From newborns to temples. From tasting and drinking to worshipping and believing.

Why do you think Peter changes how he talks about our relationship with Christ at this point?

Remember he's writing to troubled hearts. Rejected and exiled souls. And perhaps as Peter is dictating this letter through Silvanus from Rome,⁶ he pauses for a moment and thinks about what Silvanus has just written.

Yes – these troubled hearts have indeed tasted of God's goodness. For it was the goodness of God that lead them to repentance⁷ and caused them to be born again.⁸

But right now – they are being tried by fire. And so Peter uses **verses 4-10** to focus on the spiritual blessings and privileges of being united with Jesus by faith! Peter wants to encourage you today:



Believers are blessed to be united with Jesus.

While your present trials are many – don't lose heart and forget all the benefits of God's grace which has brought

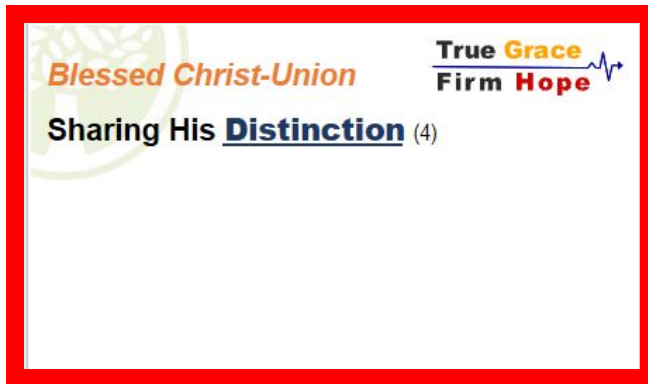
⁶ 1 Peter 5:12

⁷ Romans 2:4

⁸ 1 Peter 1:3, 23

you into God's family! You won't desire God and value growing in Him if you forget all His benefits!⁹

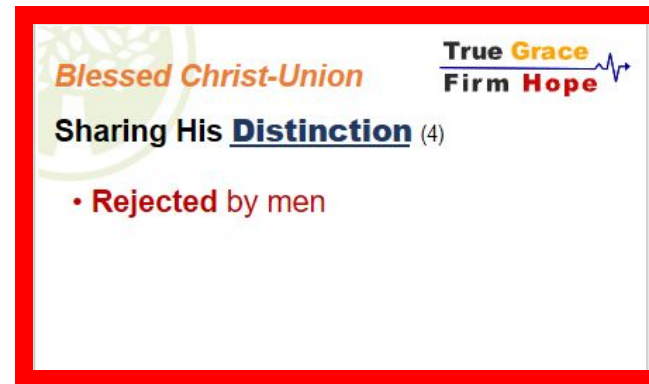
First, in **verse 4**, remember that you,



Share in Christ's Distinction (4)

Because Christ is different from the world, so likewise you who are united with Christ are different from the world. You must have the right expectations about your Savior and Lord.

When you come to Christ for strength and life, first remember that you are connecting with One who has been,



Rejected by Men

Verse 4 says clearly that the Lord is *a living stone rejected by men*. The word *rejected* literally means Jesus was examined, put on trial, and found lacking.

Jesus didn't meet the standards of the Jewish people who were looking for God's man to help them overthrow the Romans. Jesus wasn't macho enough; He wasn't kosher enough for the Jews. Thus, the Jews put Him aside, and pursued other foundations upon which to build their identity and their kingdom.

Still today most people reject Jesus. He's not sophisticated enough. He's not hip enough. He's not valuable enough. At the end of the day, the judgment of many is that Jesus is just not good enough. He doesn't measure up to what they really think they need.

Have you rejected the Son of God as He truly is? Are you still seeking for a savior who is made in your own-image?

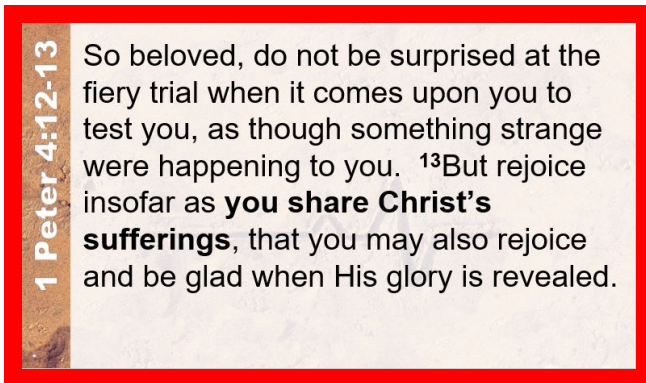
⁹ Psalm 103:1-5ff
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If so, you've rejected the very foundation stone of God's Kingdom, who according to **verse 6**, God Himself has laid down *in Zion*, or in the new covenant,¹⁰ *a cornerstone chosen and precious, so that whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame*, or you might translate this, as whoever believes in Him will never ever be eternally disappointed!

Church - follow Peter's argument:

As you grow in greater spiritual intimacy with Christ, you become more like Christ.¹¹ But as you become more like Christ, this world will reject you just like they rejected Jesus Himself.¹²

You can't share Christ's crown without also sharing His cross! You must share the fellowship of His sufferings while you await the fellowship of His glory!¹³



¹⁰ Galatians 4:24-26 compares Mt. Sinai (the Mosaic covenant of the law) to Mt. Zion (the New Covenant of promise); c.f. Hebrews 12:22-24

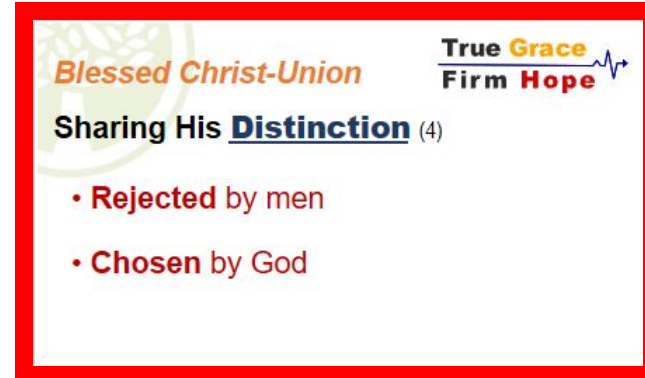
¹¹ 2 Corinthians 3:18

¹² John 15:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:12

¹³ Philippians 3:10-11

*So beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.*¹⁴

Take heart dear Christian. For while your faith-union with God's Living Stone has united you with rejection, in Christ you are also now,



Chosen by God

Verse 4 describes Jesus as *a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious*.

The word "chosen" is the same original word as "elect" in **chapter 1, verse 1**. God Himself has elected and chosen Jesus – His Son – to be the fulfillment of **Psalm 118:22** and **Isaiah 28:16**. Jesus is the chosen and precious cornerstone of God's Kingdom. God's entire household

¹⁴ 1 Peter 4:12-13

or family will be built on this all-valuable foundation of the finished work of Christ!¹⁵

So once united with Christ by saving faith – **verse 5** says

You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house...

Or to use the words of **Ephesians 2**,

Ephesians 2:19-21 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,**²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

*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.*¹⁶

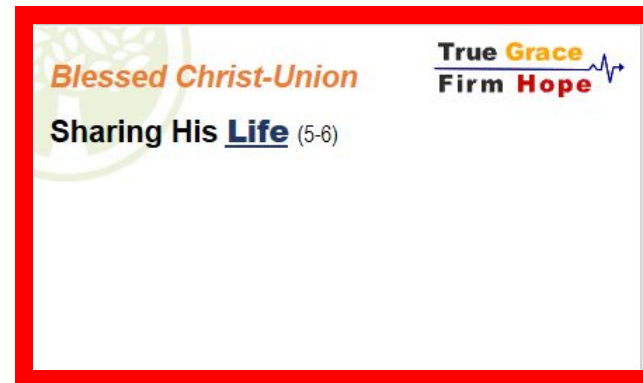
¹⁵ John 14:6

¹⁶ Ephesians 2:19-21

You see God is building Himself a temple – not a physical building – but a people. A people for His own possession. A people for Him to live in by His Spirit! That's why Peter uses the words *living stones*.

Jesus is more like a coral stone, than a granite stone. He's alive, and He grants life to all who believe on His words and thereby taste of His goodness!

So Peter wants to encourage troubled hearts that faith in Christ has not only caused them to share in Christ's peculiar and distinct position in God's plan, but in **verses 5-6**, your union with Christ provides the rich blessing of,



Sharing in Christ's Life (5-6)

Christianity is not a dead religion. God doesn't build His church through mental assent to dead creeds, or mere activity in dead rituals and programs. We don't pray to (or through) anyone who is dead. When you draw near to Christ to enjoy communion with Him – you are drawing near to Life!! Christ is your foundational living stone – from whom comes all your spiritual life, strength, and energy!

You must not miss the wonder of this Gospel reality!!

By faith, your life is now hidden in Christ.¹⁷ If every believer was a stone, God uses the power of His Word to build us together in Christ such that the whole structure grows into a holy temple for God's Spirit.¹⁸ If you were a branch, and Christ was a vine, God would graft you into the Vine!¹⁹ If you were a glove, Christ would be the hand inside you who now powered every desire and deed for God's glory!²⁰

Peter wants this to be crystal clear in your mind: When you come to the Living Stone, and believe that He is good and trustworthy, you yourselves will become alive, like living stones yourself, because you're connected to His life.

In other words, you ought to come to Jesus,



¹⁷ Colossians 3:3-4

¹⁸ Ephesians 4:12-16

¹⁹ John 15:4-11

²⁰ Galatians 2:20

For growing communion. A growing personal relationship of friendship. A “common union” of intimacy with Christ.

Note how Peter says this in **verse 5**,

Like living stones, you are passively receiving the action of God as He connects you more and more with Christ to build His spiritual house.

Now when you see the word house, think “Temple.” Think God’s Home or Dwelling Place. And notice it’s Spiritual, or “of the Spirit.” Just like the milk of **verse 2** was spiritual, and the sacrifices at the end of **verse 5** are spiritual, so God’s building is a spiritual house.

Peter is contrasting the old physical temple in Jerusalem that was built out of inanimate materials with the new and dynamic people of God that He is building by His Spirit!²¹

And for what purpose? God builds up believers through their connection with Christ *to be a holy priesthood* it says in **verse 5**. So you and God can share a life of joy, and wonder, and love, and worship!

According to the Law of Moses in the Old Testament, only one man, the High Priest, could enter the very dwelling place of God – the holiest of holies, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement.²²

But now, dear child of God – rejoice in this blessing of your union with Christ – you, yes you – have personal

²¹ 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6

²² Leviticus 16:2, 29-34; Hebrews 9:1-10, 24-26

access to commune with our Holy God through your faith union with Jesus Christ!!

Now that you have come to believe on Christ, you are welcomed into God's very presence. You don't need any human priest or pastor to mediate for you.²³ Now that you are in Christ, and His life is energizing you – you now *with confidence can draw near to the throne of grace, that you may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*²⁴

Christ has cleansed you from all sin, beloved church! Christ's Spirit is now in you, empowering you for spiritual communion with God, granting you His authority through His Spirit!!²⁵ What a blessing to be united with Jesus!

This is the blessed doctrine of “the priesthood of believers.” That all who are in Christ, are welcomed into God's very presence for a growing communion of personal relationship, all,



For a growing worship

Note the rest of **verse 5**, *to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

That's worship language. Spiritual sacrifices – not fleshly sacrifices! Because **Hebrews** tells us that animal sacrifice could never take away sin.²⁶ And you can't please God through any human effort or ritual. You can't volunteer enough, pray enough, tithe enough, or deny yourself enough to ever increase your spirituality.²⁷

You must worship God by the indwelling Spirit of God, without any confidence in your flesh.²⁸

God is building you up into His church like living stones connected to the living foundation stone of Christ, all so you might worship Him with *Spiritual* sacrifices. And don't miss this – now that you are connected to God's chosen

²³ 1 Timothy 2:5

²⁴ Hebrews 4:16

²⁵ Matthew 28:18-20

²⁶ Hebrews 10:4, c.f. v. 10, 14, 18

²⁷ Colossians 2:20-23

²⁸ Philippians 3:3; c.f. John 4:24

and precious Cornerstone, your spiritual sacrifices are produced by the Spirit of Christ in you, so that your offerings are literally, *through Jesus Christ*.²⁹

This is glorious! God's Spirit powers every expression of your worship now that you are united with Jesus!!

Spiritual Sacrifices of Christian Worship	
Rom 12:1	Present your bodies as a living sacrifice ...
Heb 13:15	Continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God ...
Heb 13:16	Do good & share ... for such sacrifices ...
Phil 4:18-19	Gifts you sent, ... a sacrifice ... pleasing to God
Eph 5:1-2	Love ... a fragrant offering & sacrifice to God
Rev 8:3-4	Incense with the prayers ... rose before God

In **Romans 12**, Paul writes how Spirit-generated worship presents your entire body or life as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. **Hebrews 13** encourages you *through Christ to continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God*. And then **verse 16** says your good works are a pleasing sacrifice of worship to God.³⁰ **Philippians 4** teaches that giving financially to God's kingdom work is a pleasing sacrifice to God, when done from Christ's strength.³¹

The fruit of God's Spirit is the *agape* love that imitates God as a spiritual sacrifice of worship in **Ephesians 5**.

²⁹ C.f. John 14:6

³⁰ C.f. Romans 15:15-16 that teach that those whom we lead to Christ (our converts) are a Spirit-sanctified offering of worship to God.


³¹ Philippians 4:13, 19-20

And in **Revelation 8**, our Spirit-led prayers³² add to the worship offering in heaven.

Blessed Christ-Union	True Grace Firm Hope
Sharing His <u>Life</u> (5-6)	
• For growing communion	
• For growing worship	

This is the essence of spiritual life! Freedom in Christ! Spirit-powered worship!! A spiritual house, priesthood, and sacrifice that far exceeds what could ever be accomplished through religious law or duty.

Peter wants us to see past our present pain, and glory in our Redeemer this morning.

Main Point

Believers are blessed to be united with Jesus.

³² Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20

All whom God has caused to be born again are blessed to be united with Jesus! How does **verse 10** summarize it all?

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.

Peter wants us to remember our identity as a people built by God's mercy upon the life-giving foundation of Christ.

We'll have to save the blessings found in **verses 6-10** for next week, but for now we've seen enough of our blessings in Christ to hear Peter's charge:

Application



**Don't lose heart –
remember you are God's people!**

Don't lose heart – remember you are God's people!

And your new life in Christ has been accomplished all through mercy. So take heart troubled soul. In Christ you are God's chosen, precious, and living child.

So long to know Christ more through His word. Come to Him now. Your Lord is not your enemy. He's your

secure and life-giving foundation! Though He's been rejected by many, He's your cornerstone, and you now have access behind the veil into the very presence of our God!

A People Built by Mercy True **Grace**
1 Peter 2:4-10 Firm **Hope**



Let's pray together as we dismiss.

<<Cornerstone>>

Benediction

After you have suffered a little while, [may] the **God of all grace**, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 5:10-11

And after you have suffered a little while, [may] the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, himself restore,

*confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion
forever and ever. Amen. **1 Peter 5:10-11***

Recommended Resources on A People Built by Mercy:

- Genesis 49:24
- Deuteronomy 32:3-4, 31
- Psalm 34:8; 118:22-26
- Isaiah 8:14-15; 28:16
- Matthew 13:41; 16:18; 21:42-43
- Luke 20:17-18
- Acts 4:11
- Romans 9:22, 33; 11:9-11
- 1 Corinthians 3:11; 10:4; 16:22
- Ephesians 2:19-22
- Colossians 3:3-4
- 1 Timothy 3:15
- Hebrews 3:6
- Jude 4
- <https://wordboard.org/2017/06/03/psalm118v24/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/come-to-the-man-rejected-by-men>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/they-were-destined-to-disobey-god>
- <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/double-predestination/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/double-predestination.html>
- [Word-Centered Church](#), Jonathan Leeman
- [The Cross and Salvation](#), Bruce Demarest
- [Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God](#), J.I. Packer

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Peter knew his Scriptures! Look up Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, and Isaiah 8:14. What theme connected these verses in Peter's mind and caused him to quote them in 1 Peter 2:4-8?
2. Read Psalm 118:22-26. Watch the ~3-minute video made by Dr. Street's son James, found at <https://wordboard.org/2017/06/03/psalm118v24/>. How does this enrich your understanding of these verses?
3. Read Matthew 21:33-44. It's very possible Peter was thinking of this teaching when he wrote 1 Peter 2:4-8. According to 1 Peter 2:5, what are the fruits Jesus spoke of in Matthew 21:43? (C.f. Romans 12:1, 15:15-16; Ephesians 5:1-2; Philippians 4:18-19; Hebrews 13:15-16; Revelation 8:3-4) Is your life marked by these superior new covenant sacrifices now? Why or why not?
4. Read 1 Peter 2:4-10. What benefits are there to being united with Christ by faith in Him? How do these benefits strengthen your hope while you are being persecuted for righteousness?
5. Read 1 Peter 2:8, Jude 4, and Romans 9:22. These are very difficult and controversial verses for many people to accept. Being careful as a group not to lose the focus of Peter's main point in this text, discuss why you believe this teaching is so controversial for many. Reference some of the recommended links as needed to help keep your discussion grounded in Scripture.
6. Read 1 Peter 2:7-8 and 10. How would you define saving faith (true belief in God)? Have you personally received this gift of God's mercy? (C.f. John 3:5-6; Titus 3:5-7) Why or why not?