

Epistle of First Peter VII

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We finished off last time down through 1-Peter 2:6 [transcriber's correction], so let's just review and go on and then we'll add quite a few other things—some of which I neglected to go over last week. 1-Peter 2:4: “To Whom you are coming...” There again, we have a present tense verb—you are coming—showing that our whole relationship with Christ is one continually coming to Him. What did Jesus say? ‘All ye who are heavy laden’—what? ‘Come to Me.’ We need to keep coming to Him on an on-going basis in prayer and study and the way we live, and everything.

“...as to a living Stone...” (v 4). As we go through here, I'll give you some things you can do as on-going Bible studies. Maybe do a concordance study of ‘stone’ in the Bible. Remember the stone, Jacob's Pillar stone, which was supposedly the stone that they took with Jacob's bones when they left the land of Egypt. And that was supposedly the stone in which water came out of to give water to the children of Israel. It's interesting that you have a living stone. Jesus said that when you receive the Holy Spirit that out of your belly shall what? *Flow rivers of living water!* So, tie in *living*, tie in *stone*, tie in *water*, tie in all those things.

“...rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious. You also, as living stones, are yourselves...” (vs 4-5). This is an interesting translation because there is a particular type of verb in the Greek that is called *middle voice*. We don't have it in English. The *middle voice* is this: that you do something for yourself. Here is the *middle voice*—and I think it gives it a little bit more authority

“...[that you] yourselves [are] being built up as a spiritual house... [Who's doing the building? Christ is. He will build His Church, His House. We covered that last time.] ...a Holy priesthood—to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this reason, it says in the Scripture, ‘Behold, I place in Zion the chief Cornerstone...’” (vs 5-6). Now, a lot of people have said it means a capstone, that it goes on top of the building. No, it's the other way around, because a *cornerstone* is a foundational stone.

“...chosen *and* precious... [*chosen* is ‘eklektos’; we are the ‘eklekto’, the chosen of God] ...and the one who is believing on Him... [We have the on-going present tense verb—or actually, present tense participle in this case.] ...will never be put to shame.’ The preciousness *is* to you therefore who are believing; but to those who are disobeying, the Stone that the builders rejected, this one became *the*

Head of the corner; even a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offense to those who are stumbling at the Word *and* are disobeying, unto which *unbelief* also they were appointed” (vs 6-8). Very interesting. You go back and tie in

- v 4—*rejected by men*
- v 7—*rejected by those*
- v 8—*a Stone of Stumbling and a Rock of offense*

And then what I did, I tied that in with “...those who are stumbling at the Word [of God]” (v 8).

Let's look at what we are actually replacing; Luke 21:1 ties in with it. I may do just an entirely separate sermon on *spiritual sacrifices*; because there's an awful lot to them. It includes:

- prayer
- study
- helping the brethren
- worshiping God
- meditating on God's Word, and so forth

I'll cover just a little bit about that today, but I want to do a whole sermon on it.

Luke 21:1: “When He looked up, He saw the rich men tossing their offerings into the treasury.... [This was a form of what? *Sacrificing worship*—supposedly—right?—in addition to the animal sacrifices.] ...Then He also saw a certain poor widow drop in two [mites] small coins.... [That was a real sacrifice on her part.] ...And He said, ‘Of a truth, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all *of them*; for all these have from their abundance cast into the offerings to God; but she, out of her poverty, did put *in* all the livelihood that she had’” (vs 1-4).

This is why God has come to call those who are *rich in faith*—maybe poor in circumstances. You see how this ties right in with:

- our character
- our attitude
- our viewpoint

being ‘living stones’; because Christ is *the* living Stone in which we go to. We are ‘living stones’ Now notice what He says of the temple; and this is important because the temple was the place where God chose to put His name. This was the place where God was centered on earth. And this will show you how powerful the New Covenant is, when you really understand it.

Verse 5: “And while some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and consecrated gifts, He said, ‘As for these

things that you now see, *the days will come in which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down*” (vs 5-6). Very interesting when you compare the stones of the building. The stones of the wall. And that’s where God placed His name.

We are to be ‘living stones’ with the attitude of Christ. Let’s go back to Isaiah 66—we’ll just plug this Scripture in because this is very important. I know in the book I have quite a bit to say about that in the section on the superiority of the New Covenant, which it is; and that’s going to make some people really upset. But nevertheless, it is a ‘stone of stumbling’—so we can’t help that. And here’s what God really wants anyway. That’s why it gets down to the *spiritual sacrifices*, and this ties in somewhat with it.

Isaiah 66:1: “Thus says the LORD, ‘The heaven *is* My throne, and the earth *is* My footstool. Where, then, *is* the house that you build for Me? And where *is* the place of My rest? For all these things My hand has made, and these things came to be,’ says the LORD...” (vs 1-2). What are you going to build for God? I mean, He created the universe!

- Are we going to build a house?
- Are we going to build a building?
- Are we going to make an idol?
- An idol is made out of what?
- *Out of wood or stone!*

So, we’re not to be like those. We’re not to be like dumb idols.

But here’s what we’re to be like—and this is part of the spiritual sacrifices, which we’re to offer: ...‘**But to this one I will look, to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word**’” (v 2). Therefore, as we’re going to see, *the duty of every minister is to point people to Christ*. Always, always, *always!* Then it says what happened, even with those physical sacrifices if they didn’t do what they were supposed to.

Now, 1-Kings 18 is referring to Elijah and all the prophets of Baal. These represented all the idol gods—didn’t they? All the prophets screamed out to the Baal day and night—and boy, that could make one funny movie. All day cut themselves, lashed themselves, and Elijah said, ‘Well, maybe you better do it a little louder, guys. Maybe he’s sleeping or on a journey. You gotta arouse Baal up.’ How many have heard *Elijah by Handle*? Well, if you haven’t get that. That song to Baal is really something! ‘Hear us O’Baal, O hear us O’Baal...’ Really, that is something! He does a good job on that.

Let’s go to Isaiah, the 40th chapter, and let’s look at some of these idols to Baal, and what people will do. It’s very interesting because when you sit

down and go through all that God has—everything that God has said—it’s exactly what every person wants. Everything that God has said is what every person wants and desires. And yet, they don’t want to do it God’s way. So, God is not honored by making things out of what He’s created to honor Him.

Isaiah 40:18: “To whom then will you compare God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him? The workman melts a graven image... [made out of the metal that comes out of the ground] ...and the goldsmith spreads it over with gold, and casts silver chains. He who is too poor...” (vs 18-20). In other words, the ones that are down in the New Guinea jungles, or the ones that are like the Indians that were up in the Northwest prior to it being taken over by the white man

“...for *that* offering... [that is he doesn’t have the means to go ahead and make a graven idol or make it out of stone] chooses a tree that will not rot; he seeks for a skillful workman for himself to prepare a graven image that will not totter” (v 20). This is an interesting comparison when you compare it with what we are to do as living stones. When you compare that to idols of stones and idols of metal and idles of wood and so forth.

He goes on to say here, v 21: “Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood *from* the foundations of the earth? *It is* He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers; *It is* He who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in; Who brings the rulers to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth as vanity. No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, then He shall blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away like stubble. ‘To whom then will you compare Me, or who is My equal?’ says the Holy One” (vs 21-25).

Whenever you get down or discouraged or thinking, as I mentioned there concerning some of those who are almost like the living dead—they’re so mesmerized in their religion. They have a social club and practice ‘religion’ and they don’t worship God. So if you’re in a situation where then you’re not as zealous as you ought to be, or you’re going through a trial or difficulty and wondering how it’s going to come out, do this, go outside and do this:

Verse 26: “Lift up your eyes on high...” That’s always humbling. You go out at night, some night when it’s real clear, and you look up and you see the stars. That’s what David said, ‘Oh Lord God, what is man that You’re mindful of him? When I see the heavens, which Your hand has created, and the sun and the moon and the stars and everything that

You have done, what is man that You have made him?’

Verse 26: “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold, Who has created these *things*... [awesome and wonderful] ...who brings out their host by number? He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for He is strong in power; not one fails” (v 26). That is really magnificent! That’s really where the source of strength and help and being living stones really comes from.

Let’s go over here to Isaiah 41:21: “‘Draw near *with* your cause,’ says the LORD. ‘Bring out your strong *reasons*,’ says the King of Jacob. ‘Let them bring *them* out, and declare to us the things that shall happen; let them reveal the former things, what they *are*, that we may consider them and know the final end of them; or declare to us things to come” (vs 21-22). I tell you, that’s where so many ministers have failed—haven’t they? Tell us things to come. They don’t happen.

Verse 26—compared to God: “Who has declared from the beginning, that we may know? And beforetime, that we may say, “*He is right*”? Yea, no one declares; yea, no one proclaims; yea, no one hears your words.”

Verse 28: “For I looked, and *there was* no man; and there was no counselor among them, that I might ask and be given an answer. Behold, they *are* all false; their works *are* nothing; their images *are* wind and vanity” (vs 28-29). Completely the opposite of what we are to be, brethren, is living stones of God.

Now let’s look at a couple of these things concerning the *spiritual sacrifices*. Let’s just go to Revelation, the fifth chapter for a minute; and let’s understand that when we pray, our prayers are heard. God hears them. He answers them. Sometimes we have to keep going back and be persistent in it, but God answers them. God is able to provide for us. When we just look at our own circumstances around us, well you know, human life is that way. In the idealistic sense, there’s something perverse about a human mind, which is this: We like to think of everything as perfect; which then, in order to have everything perfect, you must be spiritual—right? We try and have a perfect life in the flesh; but life is not perfected in the flesh. That’s why when a trial comes we may tend to get discouraged; because some of these things may be more than we really had bargained for. But God is able to see us through them.

Revelation 5: 8 talks about the four living creatures and the 24 elders: “And when He took the book, the four living creatures... [not beasts—‘beasts’ sounds a little barbaric] ...and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having

harps and golden bowls full of [odors] incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” That’s part of our spiritual sacrifices we’re to offer to God—in prayer—and they go to God. It says ‘they’re full’ of the prayers of the saints.

Now, let’s go to Revelation 8; we’ll see something very similar to it. The truth is, in the New Covenant—that’s why the New Covenant is so superior to the Old Covenant—you had to go to Jerusalem. The Old Covenant you had to offer an animal sacrifice. The New Covenant, you’re given access to God the Father, in heaven above, directly, by saying, ‘Father.’

When you think of how many men try and place themselves between you and God, and how God doesn’t care for that; because those prayers go right up to God. Sometimes we neglect to pray the way that we should. Or we’re discouraged and don’t pray. Well, maybe the reason discouragement continues is because you haven’t prayed when you know you should pray, and need to be praying when you’re not praying, and you know that you need to; but you’re not. It’s sort of a ‘catch-22’ You get like this chipmunk on the cage and just keep running and running and running—the faster you run, the faster it goes, the faster you’ve got to run. And then it goes too fast, and finally it throws you out and you land on the ground kind of dazed and you’re wondering what’s going on. God’s telling you to get off the treadmill—now you can pray.

Right in the middle of all of this that’s going on, the beginning of the trumpet plagues, just before they sound, Revelation 8:3: “And another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar...” Your prayers go straight up. We’re going to see that we are a priesthood.

How many know the difference between a Levite and a priest? *A priest was of the house of Aaron, he was from Levi!* Only the descendants of Aaron had the right of the priesthood. All of the other Levites were like assistant priests. None of those Levites could offer at the altar. When they had difficulties because there were not enough priests, then the Levites could assist at the altar of burnt offerings. But only the house of Aaron could go into the Holy place to offer incense daily. And the incense daily is likened unto our prayers. Inside the Holy place you have the incense altar. You have the labor for the bathing. You also have the golden candlestick with the seven candles in it, symbolizing the seven churches.

The priest could only go into that. And this is where the incense then was offered every day. They were to offer nothing on that incense altar but incense. And it was a special mixture of spices that to this day they don’t know what it is. And that

ascended up to God, symbolically, into the Holy of Holies, which was the next part of the inside of the temple. And in the Holy of Holies was the symbolic place where God was with the Ark of the Covenant. Well, you see, now we come—not to just Mt. Zion on the earth, but Mt. Sion in heaven above.

And here's what happens, v 3: "And another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar; and much incense was given to him, so that he might offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar that *was* before the throne. And the smoke of the incense went up before God from *the* hand of the angel..." So, our prayers go directly to God. This is a type of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let's go to Hebrews, the twelfth chapter. We need to rehearse another Scripture, which is in James, the fifth chapter, which says that 'the effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much.' Then it gives the example of Elijah. Let's see the difference.

Hebrews 12:14: "Pursue peace with everyone... [and that's the whole situation concerning the New Covenant, brethren. We have peace with God, because God has called us unto peace. The rest of the world is at war with God.] ...and Holiness... [so this is part of our spiritual growth and character] ...without which no one will see the Lord; looking diligently, lest anyone fall from the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and through this many be defiled; lest *there* be any fornicator or godless person, as Esau, who for one meal sold his birthright; because you also know that afterwards, when he wished to inherit the blessing, he was rejected... [he's drawing a comparison between that and what we are to receive] ...*and* he found no room for repentance, although he sought it earnestly with tears" (vs 14-17).

It's a very interesting thing. It shows that there comes a time when repentance will no longer prevail because it's too late. That's what 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' is all about at the Lake of Fire—it is too late! But he says:

Verse 18: "For you have not come to *the* mount that could be touched..." Remember, we started out with the mount there, with the temple as they were going away from the temple and they looked at the stones and how beautiful they were. Jesus said, 'They're all going to be torn down.' So you're not coming to that mount, which might be touched.

"...and that burned with fire... [that is, Mt. Sinai where they received the Ten Commandments] ...nor to gloominess, and fearful darkness, and *the* whirlwind; and to *the* sound of *the* trumpet, and to

the voice of *the* words, which those who heard, *begged* that *the* word not be spoken *directly* to them. (For they could not endure what was being commanded: 'And if even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned, or shot through with an arrow'; and so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, 'I am greatly afraid and trembling.')

You go back and read that in Exo. 20, how that when God descended on the mountain it was just like a volcano had exploding. Dark clouds, the mountain was altogether on fire, and of course, all the people backed away—no one went up to the mountain. The earth quaked all around. And after that's all done, here comes a voice: 'Moses, come up here to Me.' Moses exceedingly feared and quaked. Now, it had to be something spectacular, because later the people said, when he was gone for 40 days, 'We don't know what's happened to this Moses.' So you're not coming to that.

Verse 22: "But you have come to Mount Sion... [That is in heaven above; Jerusalem in heaven above, brethren!] ...and to *the* city of *the* living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels... [who are sent forth to minister to those who are as of salvation.] ...to *the* joyous festival gathering; and to *the* church of *the* firstborn, registered in *the* book of life in heaven..." (vs 22-23). That's where all the honor's going to come from. It's all going to come from God! *Not from man*. It's all going to come through Christ! *Not from man*.

"...and to God, *the* Judge of all..." (v 23). That's why every epistle starts out: 'Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ.' Because when you are under grace, your judgment is the acceptance of Christ in your stead. Now, that's something to really consider. And that's what grace is all about. Very profound!

"...and to *the* spirits of the just who have been perfected; and to Jesus, *the* Mediator of *the* New Covenant; and to sprinkling of *the* blood of *ratification*, proclaiming superior things than *that* of Abel" (vs 23-24). That's a tremendous calling, brethren; that we have been called to be a spiritual priesthood.

Now let's go back to Revelation 5 and get another view of what the scene is like when we go to pray—when we go before God to pray. And remember, the Holy Spirit itself what? *Makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered!* Because the angel then is the one who takes all the prayers of God—and I don't know how he does it, but somehow spiritually works it in such a way that it comes up before God as a sweet incense; all the prayers of the saints.

Revelation 5:8—after “...which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book, and to open its seals because You were slain, and did redeem us to God by Your own blood, out of every tribe and language and people and nation, and did make us unto our God kings and priests...’” (vs 8-10). Our royal priesthood is here now in the spiritual sacrifices, but it is going to be, in reality, in the office when Christ returns.

“...and we shall reign on the earth.’ And I saw and I heard *the* voices of many angels around the throne, and *the* voices of the living creatures and the elders, and thousands of thousands” (vs 10-11). That’s a magnificent scene. And yet, God—because He’s called you and given His Holy Spirit allows you to come before His presence with ‘Our Father in heaven, Holy is your name.’ Isn’t that something! That is amazing, brethren, when you really understand it.

Verse 12: “Saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing.’ And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and those that are on the sea, and all the things in them, I heard saying, ‘To Him Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing, and honor, and glory, and sovereignty into the ages of eternity’” (vs 12-13).

What is going to happen with all this power and riches and honor and glory? Put in your notes, Rev. 20:4-6—that we’re going to be in the first resurrection as kings and priests. Just put that in your notes, because I want you to go to Romans, the eighth chapter. And showing this tremendous privilege that God has given us; it’s an absolute blessing. That’s why God has to choose us. God has to call us. God has to open our minds to understand this. That’s why we are called *chosen!*

Romans 8:14: “For as many as are led by *the* Spirit of God, these are *the* sons of God. Now you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God” (vs 14-16).

I want you to look at Rev. 5 again. Look at that at the same time that I read these next Scriptures. Revelation 5:12: “Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.”

Romans 8:16: “The Spirit itself bears witness...that we are *the* children of God. Now if *we* are children, *we* are also heirs—truly, heirs of

God... [to power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.] ...**and joint heirs with Christ**—if indeed we suffer together with Him.... [Not the suffering that we don’t like. That’s why Paul went through so many things. I don’t like it. I still have not come to the point when I can run into Sabbath services and smile and jump up and down with joy and say, ‘Hooray! brethren, I had the most disastrous week I’ve ever had in my life.’ But I think if it keeps up that may happen! Paul sure did!] ...For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory that shall be revealed in us” (vs 16-18).

What happens when we get down and out? What happens when we get down and out? And you might put in there: flat and run over! And you might also add to it: stabbed and crushed! This is a good one to go to when you’re in trouble—Psalm 73—notice how this starts out. This is the Psalm of Asaph, this is not of David, but this is of Asaph—one of the priests.

Psalm 73:1: “Truly God is good to Israel, even to those who are pure of heart.” This statement is made in kind of a rote thing to remind God. Why? *Because he was trying to have a clean heart*—but things weren’t going so good for him, so he was reminding God.

“But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped... [Then he got into a real attitude problem—didn’t he?] ...**for I was envious of the arrogant, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked...** [There’s the ‘Fairness Doctrine.’ This must be ‘Willy’s’ problem, here.] ...For there are no pangs in their death... [everything seems to go right with them] ...and their strength is firm.... [You can’t get them out—can you?] ...They are not in trouble like other men...” (vs 2-5). I’m going to put it in there this time; I’ve been meaning to put it in there several times: ‘like me.’ Because that’s the inference here.

“...neither are they plagued like *other* men.... [like me] ...Therefore, pride is as a chain about their neck.... [You might put there: Michael Jackson and some others. You can add whatever name you want there.] ...Violence covers them like a garment” (vs 1-6). In other words, doesn’t make any difference what they do, they get everything by taking and beating and looting and stealing and bad deals.

Verse 7: “Their eyes stand out with fatness...” Kind of like this big glob in Star Wars. There’s this big oval with these huge eyes standing out. It’s pretty funny because he’s the big glutton there—and he is just like that.

“...they have more than the heart could wish

for... [I don't. Sometimes we feel that way.] ...They scoff and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth" (vs 7-9). These people have prospered wherever they go—right? *Yes!* You wonder how some of these people get into some of these offices. I mean, we're seeing some of them put in the Cabinet here in the U.S. right now—it's amazing!

Verse 10: "Therefore, waters of abundance are drunk by them. And they say, 'How does God know?... [look at all I'm getting away with] ...And is there knowledge in the Most High?' Behold, these are the wicked, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches" (vs 10-12).

- What does it say in John 17? "*We're not of the world.*"
- What does it say in Rev. 18—concerning God's people and Babylon the Great? "*Come out of her My people.*"

You can tie v 1 with v 13: "Surely **I have made my heart pure in vain** and washed my hands in innocence." Compared to them, the washing of my hands is just like washing innocent hands—not guilty hands. I've been overcoming, trying to get rid of this thing, and changing all this sort of thing. Haven't seen much results yet. Wait until the resurrection; boy, then you'll see the results—final results!

Verse 14: "For all the day long I have been plagued and chastened every morning.... [and had it—everything] ...If I say, 'I will speak thus;' behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children. When I thought to understand this, it was too painful for me" (vs 14-16). He was really having it.

Have you've ever been in this position? *Everybody's been that way.* I have! I have! You come to a situation and a problem that is so overwhelming, it is painful to even think about it— isn't it? *Yes!* What do you get? *You get a migraine! You get a headache!* Your brain goes BING! There's nothing in it. It's just sort of blank! And all of these wicked people are running around doing whatever they want, and getting whatever they want, and here you are struggling and frustrated and trying and it seems like nothing goes right.

Here's the solution—v 17: "**Until I went into the sanctuary of God...**" Asaph was a priest. In order to get away from the wicked, what did he do? *He went into the Holy place*, and when he offered the incense and prayed to God, he said, 'Yeah, God, I understand.' We have the opportunity, brethren, to come before God the Father in heaven above, in the sanctuary that's in heaven above. What you need to do is take it to God. You know, there

were some enemies that I was praying about; that I was asking God: 'Get 'em God. Take care of my enemies.' And I was getting in a real bad attitude. 'Yeah, God, get 'em!' And I got to thinking, what if someone was praying that on my behalf, because I maybe was one of their enemies. Would I want God to answer that prayer. Well *no*, because it involved me! Of course not, see! But I wanted God to get them because they were my enemies. So I learned the lesson that is in Rom. 12; that's in Matt. 5.

(go to the next track)

This is the toughest commandment in the world; especially when you have been wronged! And especially when you know you are right! Matthew 5:43: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'.... [Right on, Lord!] ...But I say to you, love your enemies..." (vs 43-44)—mumble, mumble. That's our reaction—right? Isn't it? *Yes!*

When was the last time you prayed for your enemy. Well, it's like this Rabbi in *The Fiddler on the Roof*. This guy came up to the Rabbi as they were being oppressed by the Russians, and he came up and he said, 'Rabbi, Rabbi, is there a blessing for the Czar.' And he thought for a minute and (you know, this beard and this funny little hat and everything) he pensively looked up and he said, 'Yes, may the Lord bless him and keep him FAR away from us!' But remember what Jesus said when He was on the cross of crucifixion: He said, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.' Did He keep His own commandments? *Yes, indeed!*

"...love your enemies, bless those who curse you..." (v 44). That is the hardest thing to do when you know you are right! When it's between husband and wife, and instead of being a lovey-dovey couple, you're both enemies, and you both know you're right! It's hard to pray— isn't it? 'Oh, God, open her mind so she'll understand what I'm trying to say to her.' 'Oh God, help him so that he will see that I'm right!' It's awfully hard to say, 'God, forgive me for my attitude. And please bless my husband, or bless my wife—and if there's any mind-changing to be done, my arguments can't do it, God—but Your Spirit can! In the mean time help me to bite my tongue and do what is good.'

"...do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who **despitefully** use you and **persecute** you... [Why?] ...So that you yourselves may be *the* children of your Father Who *is* in heaven..." (vs 44-45). You think you had abuse? How much abuse has God taken? I mean, and we're not counting taking God's name in vain on the golf course! And in the factories! Or in the home! Just the abuse that God has taken—everything is against God!

Now, what if God just knocked down

everybody for everything they did that was wrong—BAM! Get 'em! just like that! There would be nobody left! Now, *God is kind to the world*.

He says: "...for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and on *the* good, and sends rain on *the* just and on *the* unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing*? And if you salute your brethren only, what have you done *that is* extraordinary? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing*? Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect" (vs 45-48). That's a tall order!

In other words, knowing you can't be perfect in the flesh, what is He telling you? What is the message here? We're to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. But before you go around praying for curses on your enemies, praying for God to correct those who spitefully use you; understand what God the Father and Christ have gone through from the hand of every man, woman and child on the face of this earth. Who knows, maybe that person you're fighting and struggling against could end up being an Apostle Paul. Have you ever thought of praying for their conversion! That's an unusual thought—isn't it? Well, from that prayer, don't get up and throw a Bible in front of their face either. You may not be the instrument. God has to call them.

Now, let's go back to Psalm 73 and we'll see the end of it here. And I know some people have said, 'Oh, we know the Passover is coming. We have all these trials. There always seems to be some.' And, as I said last week, ask God: *please be merciful*.

Psalm 73:13: "Surely I have made my heart pure in vain..." What profit is it to be a Christian if you have to suffer all of this—some might say. Some might even say, since they understand the second resurrection: Why didn't God call me in the second resurrection instead of now! Well, who knows, maybe your suffering would have been worse in the world than what you've gone through in the Church. You don't know!

"...and chastened every morning.... [nothing seems to go right] ...If I say, 'I will speak thus;' behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children. When I thought to understand this, it was too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end" (vs 14-17). Why? *Because as long as you belong to God the Father, there is nothing, there is nothing, there is nothing* that anyone can do to you to take you out of His hands—NOTHING!

That's why when he went into the sanctuary, and being there, as it were, in what is called the

'shekinah': the presence or glory of God, because the glory of God filled the temple—didn't it? *Yes, indeed!* So, when he went in there in the presence of God, he understood. So that's how we need to understand these things.

"...then I understood their end.... [What is the end? *The wages of sin is death!* God has called us to what? *Life!* We're to be living stones, not dead stones.] ...Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down into destruction. How have they been brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors" (vs 17-19).

Why does God let the wicked prosper for so long? Who knows, *they may repent!*. You need to understand that! Then when it comes upon them, it's going to be just like it's happening to the Mafia over in Sicily today. The Mafia struck back and they killed judges and all kinds of people, and finally they made everybody really mad and concerned. So, they just recently just nabbed the two top Mafia people who have eluded them for 25-years. And they came back on the population so bad that the population finally said, *enough!* No more fear and intimidation from the Mafia. Now their destruction has come. So that day always comes; it always comes. Just like you have a trial come upon you, you don't expect, so with the wicked when their day of reckoning comes and God says 'enough!'—then their day has come.

Verse 20: "Like a dream when one awakens; so, O LORD, when You awake, You shall despise their image, for thus my heart was grieved and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was like a beast before You" (vs 20-22). The God of love and grace and mercy and goodness; and we go to God and say, 'Destroy our enemies' and all this sort of thing. It's a hard lesson to learn, especially if you're combative. I am combative! I'll be the first to say it. Don't cast any stones, I'll throw my own out, engraved on it: *Combative!* It's difficult, but nevertheless it's accomplishable.

Verse 23: "Nevertheless, I am always with You... [In spite of all of that! I want you to remember that.] ...You have held me by my right hand. You shall guide me with Your counsel, and **afterward** receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You I desire none upon earth. My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever, for lo, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all who go a whoring from You. And me, it is good for me to draw near to God... [There it is, right there, that's the solution.] ...I have made the LORD God my refuge, that I may declare all Your works. (vs 23-28). That's really tremendous, brethren. That's how we are to be living stones.

Let's go to Romans, the eighth chapter; let's

understand that God went through all of this Himself—*for us!* God went through everything. Now think of it for a minute, how much Christ gave up in giving up being God to become a human being, where all the angels worshiped Him and all of that sort of thing. To come on the earth and be despised, to be rejected, and then to die an ignominious death as He did.

Romans 8:24: “For by hope we were saved... [that’s the hope we just went through and showed it to you] ...but hope that is seen is not hope; for why would anyone still be hoping for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we ourselves wait for it with patience. Now in the same way also, the Spirit is conjointly helping our weaknesses because we do not fully understand what we should pray for, according as it is necessary, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be expressed *by us*. And the one Who searches the hearts comprehends what the strivings of the Spirit *are* because it makes intercession for *the* saints according to *the will* of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose” (vs 24-28).

Verse 37: “But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which *is* in Christ Jesus our Lord” (vs 37-39).

Now let’s come back to 1-Peter, the second chapter. So, there it is, brethren. That’s something! Isn’t it? My week, this week, was not too bad. I hope yours wasn’t too bad, but if it was, well that’s why we have the Sabbath; so we can be inspired on the Sabbath. Like I said last week, who knows what Monday will bring.

1-Peter 2:6: “...and the one who is believing on Him will never be put to shame.” That *shame* it’s talking about here is like the shame of defeat. Why? *Because with Christ, we are more than conquerors, because we’re going to win!* Every year the poor American Football League never makes it in the Superbowl. They have shame, *shame, shame!* Why? *Because they lost!* But we’re in a situation, brethren, where we’re NEVER going to be ashamed. *We are going to win!* Why? *Through Christ!* Never be put to shame. Why? *Because we are* ‘believing on Him.’

Let’s go to John 6; here’s the whole key thing. We’ll look at a couple of Scriptures concerning *believing*. That’s the whole point to what we’re doing, and how we’re doing it. Why God has called us: *to believe!* And this is as true today as it

was then. Since God made the universe, since God created everything that there is, and God even says, “What are you going to build for Me? What is it that you’re going to build for Me? *I’ve made everything!*” What is the greatest thing you can do for God then? *Love God and believe Him!*

John 6:28: “Therefore, they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, in order that we ourselves may do the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God...’” (vs 28-29). Every minister who has an idol that they call ‘the work’—and it is an idol!—that is put between you and God, and that you put between God and the people. ‘What is the work that we may work the works of God?’ Now, there is a work to do, that is true.

But here is the primary work: “...Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God: **that you believe in...** [The Greek there is ‘ice’ which means *into*] ...**Him Whom He has sent**’” (v 29). *You believe Christ!* What is that going to do for you?

Let’s come back here to John 5:46: “But if you believed Moses, you would have believed Me; for he wrote about Me. And if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe My words?” (vs 46-47).

Verse 21—here’s what believing on Christ does; and this is the only solution: “For even as the Father [quickens (*KJV*)] raises the dead and gives life, in the same way also, the Son gives life to whom He will.... [Now, ‘quicken’ means *to give life*. That’s like seeing a corpse lying there and say, ‘Rise and walk.’] ...For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son... [Why? *Because He’s gone through every bit of it.*] ...So that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father Who sent Him. Truly, truly I say to you, the one who hears My word, and believes Him Who sent Me, **has everlasting life...** [because you receive the Holy Spirit] ...and does not come into judgment... [because of the grace of God] ...for he has passed from death into life” (vs 21-24). That’s why we’re to be living stones. “...passed from death to life”; and that all ties in with being the living stones.

I still am going to give this sermon—I think I’ll title it: *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead*; those are the words of Christ. Let’s come back here to 1-Peter, the second chapter, and we’ll be done here in just a little bit. We didn’t get very far today, sorry about that—there will be days like that.

1-Peter 2:7: “The preciousness *is* to you therefore who are believing; but to those who are [disbelieving] disobeying, the Stone that the builders

rejected... [that is the Jews who were doing the building then] ...this one became *the* Head of the corner; even a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offense to those who are stumbling **at the Word**... [Anyone who's offended at the Word of God, you're stumbling at Christ] ...*and* are disobeying, unto which [destruction] *unbelief* also they were appointed" (vs 7-8).

If you *stumble* on that Stone, if you *fall* on the Stone you'll be broken—***broken in repentance; broken of your vanity and your lust and your greed and your self***—when you *fall* on that Stone. But those who *stumble* on the Stone, Jesus said, 'It will grind him to powder.' That's the destruction unto which they were appointed.

All Scriptures from The Holy Bible in its Original Order, A *Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter
Exception: 1-Peter, from *The Seven General Epistles* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) 1-Peter 2:4-8
- 2) Luke 21:1-6
- 3) Isaiah 66:1-2
- 4) Isaiah 40:18-26
- 5) Isaiah 41:21-22, 26, 28-29
- 6) Revelation 5: 8
- 7) Revelation 8:3
- 8) Hebrews 12:14-24
- 9) Revelation 5:9-13
- 10) Romans 8:14-16
- 11) Revelation 5:12
- 12) Romans 8:16-18
- 13) Psalm 73:1-17
- 14) Matthew 5:43-48
- 15) Psalm 73:13-28
- 16) Romans 8:24-28, 37-39
- 17) 1-Peter 2:6
- 18) John 6:28-29
- 19) John 5:46-47, 21-24
- 20) 1-Peter 2:7-8

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 1-Kings 18
- James 5
- Exodus 20
- Revelation 20:4-6
- John 17
- Revelation 18
- Romans 12

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