

The Message of the General Letters
You Are a Chosen People
1 Peter 2:1-12

Intro: We see no particular concern in the Scripture for establishing a succession of ordination for pastors. We see no “magic” in a particular set of hands being laid on the heads of those who are ordained to the ministry. Since this is not a concern of ours, establishing Peter’s position in the early church is not a great concern to us either. We do not view him as the first pope. The whole idea of a ruler of the entire church other than Jesus seems to us to be outside the teaching of Scripture.

Peter is a pastor, and he writes to fellow pastors and fellow believers. He writes from “Babylon.” I don’t know if he is talking about the actual city of Babylon on the Euphrates or Rome or some other place. But I like the fact that this pastor ministers in a city which deserves the title “Babylon,” a name that stands for fallen and sinful urban centers. We pastors who labor in the great urban centers of our own time feel a kinship with Pastor Peter.

I. You are a Stone on a Journey—a journey toward Christ--*As you come to him, the Living Stone* (2:4)

A. [You come to him perpetually](#). You have already arrived, and you have not yet arrived. Pastor Peter says that we are coming to Jesus. But we already came. Should this not be in the past tense? No. God intends for our coming to be a perpetual movement of the heart. Truthfully, where else are you going to go?

***Christians are a centered set rather than a bounded set. We are a people centered on Christ. None of us is “there yet” in terms of our behavior and lifestyle. We are moving toward the goal.

B. [You come to him intentionally](#). The more you come to him, the more he builds you into the spiritual house, connecting you to one another. Your spiritual maturity is not a solo flight. You are going to flourish only as you are incorporated by Christ into his larger Body and his purpose in the world.

C. [You set aside some baggage](#). Your journey requires that you get rid of some things. *Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind* (1 Peter 2:1). You should notice that this list of personal sin does not include the scandalous sins which are more famous. He is talking to believers who are on a spiritual journey. He wants them to grow up, leaving behind sins of attitude and tongue.

D. [You pick up new equipment](#). Your journey requires that you crave something. *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* (1 Peter 2:2-3).

1. Growing up means dropping some desires and replacing them with others. You have to do this switch because you are going to feed your appetite.
2. Making the switch from malice, envy, and deceit is a matter of TASTING. You have tasted that the Lord is good. Once you get a taste of being with the Lord Jesus, you don’t want to be anywhere else. Once you eat this food, you don’t need any other.

***The disciples got back from a trip to McDonalds in town to get some Big Macs. When they found Jesus he was not hungry. He told them, “I have food to eat that you don’t know about.” They wondered who had given him some food. He said, “My food is to do

the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (John 4:34). As we spend time with Jesus, our appetites will change.

II. You are Chosen for a Glorious Purpose: to bring glory to God. *You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). To God’s elect, strangers in the world...who have been chosen (1 Peter 1:1-2).*

A. You are chosen in Christ. Jesus himself is the Chosen One, the Living Stone. He is the Promised One, the seed of the woman, the prophet like Moses, the king like David, the Son of Man, God’s Suffering Servant. *He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake (1 Peter 1:20).*

Jesus was chosen from the beginning. All the rest of us find our election in him. We come to Christ, and in our coming to Christ, we are God’s chosen ones. He has been revealed for our sake.

We confess the mystery of our election. We do not know how all this works out for every person in every generation and every location in the world. We just know Jesus, and knowing him is it.

B. You are shielded by God’s Power (1 Peter 1:5). Our election in Christ should thrill us and comfort us and inspire us every day. Out of all the people on the planet, God has set us aside for his purposes. Out of all the people living in New Orleans, God is choosing to do his eternal, transforming work here through us.

The power of God is protecting and preserving his chosen ones through their trials. You need not fear that you will be lost in the fight. God is watching over you in your temptations and your troubles. *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials (1 Peter 1:6).*

C. You are bringing God glory. All of us have been chosen for just this same purpose. God is building a spiritual house out of us. We are a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices. That is the function of the people of God in this world.

***We gathered the stones by the truckload—every size and shape that our hands could carry. We pulled them from the arroyo where they had been rounded and smoothed by the rushing water from the mountain rains. We worked hard because we had a grand purpose lying before us—we were building a house for our growing family. We would construct it completely out of the sand and gravel and stone from the desert.

This was an intriguing thing for me as a five-year-old boy. I remember being on that foundation. I remember my father hefting the huge stones and placing them in that wall. And any time I see a picture of that house, I experience the pride of contributing in some little way to its construction.

An architect visited our building recently. He is part of an architectural fellowship who toured the building soon after its construction. He mentioned to me again how beautiful it is. But I know where the credit goes for that. Surely not to be, but to the architect, E. Eean McNaughton, who designed this place. In just such a way, the Master Architect and Builder receives glory from his church, the “spiritual house.”

III. You are Chosen for a Specific Purpose. God had a particular spot in mind when he chose you.

***We moved those stones from the old Army truck to piles around the perimeter of the foundation. I watched my father lay the stones that created our desert home. He chose each one carefully. Each time he was looking for a particular shape or size. Building a stone wall, unlike brick, involves choosing the right stones. A section of wall would give way if the stones were not suitable.

A. You fill a particular spot in the Building of God, in the Body of Christ. No one else can fill that place. You want to let the Master Builder set you there. He knows what he is doing.

You will not find true fulfillment in this life apart from your participation in this building project that God is up to. You must see yourself, not as a single work of art, but as a part of the whole. We are the Body, we are a Bride, we are a Building.

Our unique giftedness—our shape and size spiritually— is given to each of us for the COMMON GOOD.

B. You are shaped by the Master Builder for that place. I wish I did not have to tell you this, but I must. God's purpose for you involves suffering. It is a necessary part of what God is doing in you. Even Jesus, the Cornerstone, was "perfected through suffering," the Scripture says: *In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering* (Hebrews 2:10). The Cornerstone is the single stone which must be shaped most carefully. Even if the other stones escape the sharp edge of the trowel and the slam of the hammer, the Cornerstone would not escape it. He carried our infirmities. He was afflicted with our perfections. And the scourge of our failure fell upon him, the Cornerstone.

You will find your particular place in this spiritual house in part through the tribulations that you endure. These trials are shaping you. *These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor* (1 Peter 1:7).

You bring God glory through your response of faith in your pain. And you submit because you know the purpose of the Master Builder in shaping you through the fires of tribulation.

C. You get your orientation from the Cornerstone.

***I watched the skilled masons as they laid the brick for our new kitchen. They pulled strings tight across the face of the wall. They measured with rulers the spaces between bricks right to left and up and down. I was surprised how much time they spent on the very first brick in each course. The mason wanted that first brick to be just right. They worked hard on that first one because it set the line for the entire course to come.

When you trust in this Cornerstone, orienting your life according to his position, then you will never be "put to shame." Conclusion: *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us* (1 Peter 1:12).