

You may remember when we studied Joshua, how when the Israelites came to the Jordan, which they had to cross to enter the Promised Land, he instructed the men to take a stone to represent each tribe.

“We will use these stones to build a memorial. In the future your children will ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’

Then you can tell them, ‘They remind us that the Jordan River stopped flowing when the Ark of the LORD’s Covenant went across.’ These stones will stand as a memorial among the people of Israel forever.”

We are living stones – memorials of what God has done in our lives.

Read verses 4-7

Stones scattered around in no order are just that – they do not mean anything. However, we are being built up into God’s spiritual temple based on Jesus Christ the CORNERSTONE. He who was once rejected has now become the most important one.

- Do we appreciate the importance of being part of something so much bigger than we could ever have imagined?
- God has determined your placement in this spiritual temple. Do you see that as an honour? Do you understand how important you are?

Read verses 8-10

Peter goes on to reveal how special we are because we are a chosen people.

- What do you think it means to be part of a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s very own possession?

With all these wonderful blessings, however, comes responsibility.

- How do we show others the goodness of God, and how has that been made possible?

Verse 10 says that as God’s people, we have received God’s mercy. This word means: compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm.

James 2:13 tells us: **Mercy triumphs over judgement.**

- What do you think this means?

Read verses 11-12

When I read verse 11, it reminds me of an old gospel song I had on a 78-rpm record, played on a Dancette!

*This world is not my home, I’m just a-passing through,
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue,
The angels beckon me from heaven’s open door,
And I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.*

- Do we feel sometimes that we cannot relate to the world in which we live?
- What do you think it means to *keep away from worldly desires*, and how do we achieve that?

Verse 12 shows us why we should constantly have in our minds the title of this study: *“How then shall we live?”* Most people never come to church, most people never read their Bibles so all they have to go on regarding Christianity, is you and me. They will judge by what we say and do. It’s a big responsibility on our shoulders!

Read verses 13-17

These verses can be difficult for some people, so it is important that we take note of the first few words: **“FOR THE LORD’S SAKE”**. We are God’s ambassadors and as such, we must be obedient to his instructions. The reason for this is given in verse 15: *“It is God’s will that your honourable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you.”*

Romans 13:1-7 teaches us that we are subject to the government. God established governments and we are to give them what we owe them: respect, taxes, etc. However, there are occasions when we cannot do this. Remember in Acts 5 when the authorities told Peter and the Apostles to stop teaching and healing in the name of Jesus? Their response was: **“We must obey God rather than men.”** (verse 29).

The **PURSUE** website says:

*“Here Peter gives us the basics of civil disobedience for Christians. We generally submit to the government **unless the government disobeys God**. For instance, it is illegal to have Bibles in some places in the world, yet Christians smuggle them in so that people can learn about Jesus. In other places it is against the law to have a church, so Christians meet underground in illegal churches.”*

- What is your view of this?

Verses 18-25

We may feel that verse 18-19 does not apply today but it is the principle of submitting to our bosses in the workplace. Today we have laws, and trade unions that look after the rights of workers but still we should always live out our Christian beliefs in those situations.

We are called to follow in Christ’s steps and Peter reminds us that he is our example, someone who never sinned or deceived anyone. It can be difficult to do this, but nevertheless, it is the standard set by Christ for us. As verse 23 says: *He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.*

Can we trust the one who gave everything for us to look after our interests?

- What is our reaction to this idea?
- Do we find it difficult to trust God in all situations?

Verses 22-25 remind us of what Jesus did for us.

- Do we find it difficult to follow the example of Jesus?
- What things can be a problem for you?
- Is verse 25 one of comfort for you?

One verse of scripture we should always remember: *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* (Philippians 4:13).



Prayer:

Father God, help me to always trust you and not try and do things my way.

Amen