

1 Peter 2: 1-12

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[0 : 00] and just pray as we come before God's body. Heavenly Father, still have hearts before you at this time.

We indeed, Heavenly Father, seek to learn more of you. As we have prayed already, Heavenly Father, wherever we are in our journey with you, whether this be our first week here, or whether it be our home, that, Heavenly Father, that we would indeed seek to walk closer to you.

And we would seek, Heavenly Father, to learn more of you. And if we find, Heavenly Father, as we examine our hearts this morning, that we have an emptiness, that we have a void, that we would indeed come to you.

For you are the only one that can fill that void. And Heavenly Father, we pray that we would indeed come to you without delay. Bless us as we study your word.

And the all that is said, Heavenly Father, be to your glory and to your honour. In Jesus' precious name. Amen. Amen. Over the past few weeks, as we've studied God's word, David's been taking us through the last couple of books, the last couple of chapters, sorry, in John, as we come to the cross of Christ.

[1 : 37] And as we do that, we focused last week on Peter's denial. And this morning, with God's grace, I'd like us to look at the verses that we read here in 1 Peter in chapter 2.

And as we do so, that each one of us would examine our hearts as we focus on the passage. David has emphasised these past few weeks that as we move towards the cross in our studies, that we are also as a congregation moving towards another communion season.

And as Christians, we come in obedience and we come in expectation. We come in obedience to the command to remember the Lord's death until he comes.

And we come in expectation. for sinners to be converted, for new members to come and honour Christ and profess him publicly.

In 1 Corinthians 11, we read, I reach in every communion, every one ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. That time of examination for some will have already begun.

[3 : 02] sadly for some it will not be the first time that will have come to the point realising their need of Christ, their need to profess him as their Lord and as their Saviour.

But sadly again there will be those that will turn away and leave it for another time. a couple of questions.

What is it that causes you to stumble? What is it that causes you to turn away? What is it that puts you off taking that final step that you know that you must take?

Before we come to the answer to these questions what I would like to do is just at the beginning of this chapter is look at what Peter says about Christians and how Christians should live their lives.

In verses 1 and 2 therefore rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit hypocrisy envy and slander of other kind like newborn babies crave your pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

[4 : 31] I'm going to read the same verses again this time. I'm going to read them from Spurgeon's verse expositions of the Bible. You just bear with me.

It's the first Peter chapter 2 and verse 1. Wherefore laying aside all malice Spurgeon says this is one of the old corruptible things so put it away from you and all guile all crafty tricks all falsehood exaggeration double meanings to your words and the like.

and hypocrisies and envies all hatred of those who are either better or better off than you are and all evil speaking thus the tongue expresses what the heart expresses what the heart feels.

Laying all these evil things aside you will prove that you have been born again born of the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth forever.

as newborn babes desire the sincere milk that you may grow thereby. you are in the family of God you are in the family of God you are in the family of God but you are only babes in it yet you have to grow to the stature of men in Christ Jesus so desire the sincere unadulterated milk of the word that you may grow thereby there is no other way of growing.

[6 : 11] Peter reminds us here of the need to put off the old man and put on the new. 2nd Corinthians 5 and 17 a verse well known to many therefore if anyone is in Christ they are a new creation the old is gone the new is here.

If you are a Christian here today and we think on these verses and we consider Paul's teaching in Corinthians I ask myself the question as I am sure each one of you do how much of the old man is still within us?

How much of the old man do we show to those round about us? Some may say none and quote the verse that I have just quoted above the old is gone the new is here and may even quote from Galatians 2 and 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me the life I now live in the body I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me wouldn't it be great if that was a testimony of each and every one of us here this morning?

There is no longer I that lives but Christ lives in me the life I now live in the body I live by faith in the son of God unfortunately I'm sure more of us can align ourselves with the other words that Paul wrote in Romans 7 for I do not do the good I would want to do but the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing now if I do what I do not want to do it is no longer I who do it but it is the sin living in me that does it while we have died to Christ or died to sin unfortunately sin still lives within us and so often the good that we would want to do we do not do it and the evil that is within us so often comes through it's a challenge for each and every one of us as Christians we were born in sin and our very nature is sin imagine if you will you go out and you buy a new house some of us have experienced that but on this occasion you buy a house from somebody who was very much into gothic art the walls of the house were all painted black immediately set about painting the walls white to brighten the place up you work hard at putting a single coat of paint on every wall in the house at first it looks okay it looks brighter but on closer inspection there are bits that are missed the black shone through the walls are more a grey colour than anything else so you get the paintbrush out again you get a tin of paint and you work tirelessly painting the walls white right throughout the house again satisfied with what you've done you decide it's time to go on holiday sadly unbeknownst to you the previous owner of the house still is a key and while you're away on holiday you come back and you paint the walls black right through the house as Christians that's what we've got to be on our guard against each and every day we're under new management as we said earlier the old is gone the new has come but if we take our eyes off the new manager that is Christ and for one minute think that we can go it alone that we can take a break from reading God's word take a break from coming to church sin gets a foothold and if we allow it to take hold we can find that our position is far worse than we were in the first place what guidance does Peter give us on this 1 Peter 2 and verse 2 it says like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow in your salvation what does it mean to crave well I was never very good at English in school but one thing

I do know is that crave is a verb it's something that we have to do and the dictionary definition of crave is that we have to long for we have to want we have to desire eagerly we require to ask earnestly to beg for and as Christians my question to you this morning is what are you longing for what is it you're eagerly desiring what is it you're begging for being a Christian is like being a work in progress well the price has been paid for our sins we're reminded in God's word Angus prayed about going through the gate in Luke 13 it's at verse 24 it says strive to enter in at the narrow gate are you striving this morning in Philippians 3 and 12 14 not that I have already obtained all this for I have already arrived at my goal but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ took hold of me brothers and sisters

[13:03] I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it but one thing I do forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus are you pressing on this morning or are you looking behind you to see what's left remember Lot's wife press on don't look back forget what's behind and press on towards the goal and then he's well known verses in Hebrews therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses let us throw us off everything that hinders from the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before him endured the cross scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God consider him who endured such opposition from sinners so that you will not grow weary and lose heart are your eyes fixed on Jesus this morning we can't sit still we must strive we must press on we cannot take our eyes off the prize why because if we do and we slip and we fall we may even become a stumbling block for others in the way

Romans 14 12 and 13 says so then each of us will give an account of ourselves to God therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another instead make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister we must fix our eyes on Jesus we must press on towards the goal we must strive each and every day to enter in at the narrow gate because as we walk and as we talk others are watching and the last thing we want to do is take our eye off Jesus and strive and press on in the wrong direction and therefore become a stumbling block for others so as Christians we have to lay off the old man and take on the new we have to crave God's word every day we have to strive to enter into

God's presence every day we must be moving forward and growing in our faith and we must never grow weary or lose heart we can't do it in our own strength we must rely on God what then to the non-believer or those who have not yet professed faith what does Peter say here verse 4 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 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 but you are a chosen people a royal priesthood a holy nation

God's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful life once you were not a people but now you are the people of God once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy what is the stone that causes you to stumble today what is the rock that makes you fall again referring back to Spurgeon's exposition on this very verse and he comments on verse 7 and 8 when Peter wrote these verses he must have thought of his own name he was called a stone or a rock and once he was to his master a rock of offence when he stumbled at Christ's word and began even to rebuke his Lord for he was forgiven and saved so now he gives a warning to others lest they should still more grievously sin by making Christ himself to be to them a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence he spoke at the beginning that each one of us must come and examine our hearts and as you examine your hearts

I don't think there is anyone here that they would say that they do not have a need of Jesus in their heart there is not one that would say they do not desire to know God better but for some it is a step too far there is a stone or a rock in your life that is stopping you taking that final step causing you to stumble at the last what is that rock what is that stone you may say to yourself my sin is too great I can't live up to the standard expected or sadly I have seen how Christians behave and if that's Christianity I don't want any part of it or I know what I must do but I'm just not ready

[20 : 10] I could go on and I don't underestimate in any way the struggle that goes on in many hearts each and every one of us as Christians has been there but for a moment I would ask you to consider this when you ask these questions who or what is your focus on is your focus on yourself and those that you see around about you my sin is too great have you persecuted people even given consent to their death Paul did and Paul was forgiven we all know the testimony of Paul as he was on the road to Damascus and he saw the shining light which blinded him and he was asked by the

Lord so so why do you persecute me it is hard for you to kick against the bullets and then I asked who are you Lord I am Jesus whom you are persecuting the Lord replied now get up and stand on your feet I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness and what you have seen will see I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles I am sending you to them open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith have you committed adultery and murder David had and he was forgiven the last couple of weeks in the prayer meeting David's been taking us through Psalm 51 and we can read in 2nd

Samuel 11 and in chapter 12 of David's sin and how then the prophet Nathan came to him and challenged him on his sin and how David then poured out his heart have mercy on me oh God according to your unfailing love according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin for I know my transgressions and my sin is always before you against you you only have I sinned and done what is evil on your side so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge and he goes on surely I was sinful at birth sinful from the time my mother conceived me reiterating that each and every one of us is born in sin and then he asks

God cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean wash me and I will be whiter than the snow let me hear joy and gladness like the bones you have crushed rejoice hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity create in me a pure heart oh God and renew a right spirit within do not cast me from your presence or take your holy spirit from restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain you then I will teach transgressors your way so that sinners will turn back to you deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed oh God you who are my God and my saviour and my tongue will sing of your righteousness open my lips and my mouth and I will declare your praise have you committed theft the thief on the cross is forgiven you read in Luke 23 one of the criminals who hung the air held insults at him aren't you the messiah save yourself and us but the other criminal you boot him don't you fear

God he said since you are under the same sentence we are punished justly for we are getting what our deeds deserve but this man has done nothing wrong then he said Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom Jesus answered him truly I tell you today you will be with me in paradise is your sin so great that it can't be forgiven three men each had sinned we can read their accounts in the bible each and every one of them forgiven one had a personal meeting with Jesus on the cross one never ever met Jesus his sin was committed before Jesus was even born a friend came to him and pointed out his sin and he fell before

[25 : 44] God and asked for forgiveness the other was spoken to in a blinding light three very different meetings with God but each and every one of them forgiven for the sins that they had committed is your sin so great that you can't come before God and ask forgiveness the price has been paid for each and every one of us no matter what our sin is we can come and we can have forgiveness stop focusing on the sin and start focusing on the one that can forgive that sin I can't live up to the standard what is the standard what is it that you're afraid of Romans 10 verse 9 11 11 11 11 if you declare with your mouth

Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved for it is with your heart that you believe and are justified and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved as scripture says anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame what's the standard the standard is that you come and you believe that Jesus died for your sins and you call upon his name that's the only standard that anyone any one of us has to meet we don't have to come up to any other scratch card that somebody might be holding all that we have to do is come and believe and call on his name you're called to believe and if you're here this morning I believe there must be an element of belief in Jesus and in God within your heart the biggest stumbling block for some of you may be that you feel you aren't able to walk and talk the same as other

Christians particularly those that have been on the road for many years that's not the case if you think back to when you were born how many of you when you left the hospital were able to walk and talk the day you left not one of you not one others I guess we had to learn we had to grow we had to crawl we had to have someone or something to hold on to as we took our first steps but we progressed and we mastered it with the help and encouragement of others as we come in faith believing we have to learn we have to grow and we have to trust not in ourselves but in Jesus he will help us he will hold us and he will guide us

Christian brothers and sisters will be there to encourage each and every step of the way and in seeing new brothers and sisters coming what an encouragement it is to us as Christians who have been on the road for many years we talk about encouragement we intimated the Christianity Explored course we've run discipleship Explored courses here in the past and just as learning to walk is a journey so is the Christian life if you need encouragement or you need help on the journey I would encourage not to be put off but I would encourage each and every one of you if that's the way you find yourself today to go along to the Christianity Explored course no one will be turned away so you might be sitting there saying

I've seen how Christians live I've seen how they behave I don't want any part of it it's sad if that's your stumbling block this morning as we already said it's in our nature for each and every one of us sometimes to look around and judge others at the end of the we've done it all our lives if we've had siblings with our parents if we're married we've done it with our husbands and wives we compare we judge we question we envy why because our focus is all wrong and that's why at the start of this book at the start of this chapter sorry Peter reminds Christians of how they must live their lives so they do not become a stumbling block to others don't focus on the person sitting on your left or on your right

[31 : 16] I go back to the passage that we read in Hebrews fix your eyes on Jesus he's the author he's the perfecter nobody can live up to or meet the standard that was set by Jesus but we strive we press on and each and every one of us must maintain our focus on Jesus as the author and perfecter Jesus is the one we must look at not at our neighbour the neighbour is striving to be like Jesus and sadly so often we fail and we make mistakes we're a poor reflection don't judge the Christian life and what you see and how you see other people living come to Jesus and fix your eyes upon him I know what I must do but I'm not ready about stumbling block for me it's not my time years ahead of me some might even say I'm too old or I'm too young as we study on Sunday night in the book of James we'll come to the verses in chapter 4 now listen you who say today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city spend a year there carry on business and make money why you don't even know what tomorrow will happen tomorrow what is your life you are a mist that appears for a little while then vanishes have you made plans have you got your life marked out for you what a stark reminder these verses are for us each and every one of us what is your life you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes we can drive along the road the mist can be there and then the sun comes out and burns it off and then it's gone climb to the verses in Jeremiah 29 verse 11 for I know the plans

I have for you declares the Lord plans to prosper you and not to harm you plans to give you a hope and a future why are you putting off trusting without God our lives are but a mist in God we have a hope and a future what would you prefer today when Mary went to the tomb on that resurrection morning the stone had already been rolled away not by her or by the soldiers God had moved the stone and in the same way if you have a stone of stumbling or a rock that makes you fall take it to Jesus in faith and ask that the stone is rolled away so that the rock is no longer a rock on which you fall but a rock on which you stand and a rock on which you have a new song in your heart we read of Paul and we read of David both men had sinned both men had asked God for forgiveness but what were they charged with

I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles I am sending you to them to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light that's what was said to Paul and David in the psalm says then I will teach transgressors your way so that sinners will turn back to you deliver me from the guilt of blood shed oh God you are my God my Saviour and my tongue will sing your righteousness open my lips Lord the thief on the cross didn't have the opportunity to witness to anybody there is story as recounted in the gospels as a reminder to each and every one of us there is salvation at the cross but don't put it off until the very last minute if there's a rock of stumbling in your heart pray to

God come to God and in faith that rock will be removed so that you can sing that new song and that you can be involved in answering the call to go out and make disciples us let's pray dear my father may anything that has been said amiss be white though and may you indeed be seen as the one that can lift us from the pit of our life you can take away the stone of stumbling you can take away the rock from which we caught and you can indeed create a sure foundation that solid rock that is Christ and heavenly father that our very hope our very trust would indeed be upon

Jesus that we would not heavenly father be leaning on anything that takes us away but heavenly father that we would indeed come to you each and every day craving through your work striving to be more like Jesus pressing on with our eyes firmly affixed upon our Lord with the death a sh rose th his ■ dia night mold night oh oh yeah ahtw that yeah life ■