

Living Stones, Living Sacrifices

by Peter Hammond

We are called to be living stones, built up as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and to be a part of the church, which is the body of Christ.

Duration: 34:19

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Peter 2:9, 1 Peter 2:21

Topics: "Missions"

Description

The video is a summary of a six-year project that resulted in sermons being shaped into chapters for books on Old Testament and New Testament surveys. These sermons were also made into audiovisual box sets and uploaded on a sermon audio page on the web. The Livingston Fellowship website received a high number of visitors and reached millions of people through social media platforms. The video also mentions the importance of Bible study, prayer, evangelism, and worship in a balanced Christian life, and the need to respond to God in prayer and praise.

Transcript

Living Stones, Living Sacrifices. Let us turn the Word of God to 1 Peter Chapter 2. 1st Epistle according to Saint Peter, Chapter 2, we will be reading from verse 4 to 7. 1 Peter 2, 4 to 7. Let us hear the Word of the Living God. Coming to Him as to a Living Stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious.

You also, as Living Stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes in him will by no means be put to shame. Therefore, to you who believe he is precious, but to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Word of Almighty God. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. He is the Living Stone.

The stone which the builders rejected is worthless. Jesus said, If anyone falls on that stone, he shall be cut to pieces. But if that stone falls on someone, it will crush him to dust.

It is no small matter to reject Christ. He is the cornerstone. Christ alone is the head of the church.

Christ alone is the mediator, the only mediator between God and man. The wise man builds his house on the rock, and the winds can blow, and the rain can fall, and the storm can rage, and the floods can rise, but the house built on the rock will stand firm. Our foundation matters.

Firm foundations are only found in Christ through His Word as revealed to us through the Scriptures. Jesus Christ is our rock-solid foundation. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jesus is the Living Word. He is the Living Stone. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

We are lost. Jesus is the Way. We are deceived.

Jesus is the Truth. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. He is the Life.

He is the Resurrection Life. No one comes to Father but by Him. Christ alone.

Truth conquers. You shall know the truth Jesus said, and the truth shall set you free. In whom the Son sets free shall be free indeed.

1 Corinthians 3 verse 11 declares, For no other foundation can anyone lay other than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church. He is the rock-solid foundation for our lives, our faith, our conduct, our hope, our future, our families.

It speaks about coming to Him. We come to Christ in repentance and faith. The only way we can approach God is in faith and repentance.

We are God's chosen people. A holy nation. A royal priesthood.

A people belonging to God. Called to worship. Called to work.

Called to warfare. Called to work for the extension of God's Kingdom. We who were dead in our trespasses and sins have been made alive by His grace.

Received by faith alone. Centred on the sacrifice of Christ's own blood on the cross of Calvary. We are saved by the grace of God alone.

Received by faith alone. Because of the sacrifice of Christ alone. And so, we who are dead in our trespasses and sins have been made living stones.

God has taken out the heart of stone and given us a heart of flesh. This is what it means to be born again, to be regenerate. That God has taken out the stony heart and given us a spiritual living heart.

So we are now living stones being built into this spiritual house. He has taken out our heart of stone. Now we are living stones as part of His church.

His family. His army worldwide. What a privilege it is to be sons and daughters of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

What a privilege to be servants of God. To be soldiers of Christ. For the Creator.

The Redeemer. The Sovereign Lord. Our Saviour.

The Eternal Judge of the Universe. The church is a spiritual house. The church is not actually a building.

As in a physical building, although magnificent church buildings and cathedrals point us to God and point to the dedication of people's art and architecture, hard work and work ethic, in building monuments to our faith, standing in many cities around the world, pointing people to the supremacy of Christ in all the ages, just like our calendars, A.D. and B.C., show that Jesus Christ is the greatest person who ever lived, His birth the greatest event in history, is the hinge of the ages, so we date all time as before Christ or in the year of our Lord. B.C. and A.D. And so, not to minimize the importance of church buildings or of cathedrals, but the church is not buildings. The church is built up of living stones.

Those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, who are, in fact, the church. The church are the people of God. That is why when communists come and burn church buildings, they are engaged in a fruitless war against God.

You cannot destroy the church by burning buildings. You cannot destroy the church by killing Christians. Death for the Christian is not fatal.

Death for the Christian is not final. Jesus is the resurrection, the life. And so, we have seen many a church, I have seen and ministered in, one over hundred churches worldwide that have been destroyed, burnt, bombed, wrecked one way or the other by communists and Muslims, which have been restored, rebuilt, and are being used again for the glory of God.

I can just mention some, like in Kauda, Kotibi, Loi, Mundri. All over we see Chiliso in Angola, many churches that were destroyed. Think of Calvary Baptist Church in Arad, just another example of a church confiscated by communists, turned into a factory, again taken over by the church.

And liberated from the communists, rebuilt again for the glory of God. The church is not buildings. And the church is even more than our bodies, because we are living souls.

And even if they kill the body, they cannot destroy our soul, which is eternal, nor can they destroy the church of Christ, which is ever victorious. This also teaches the priesthood of all believers. Unlike the Roman Catholics, we do not see a Pope, a human being as the head of the church, Christ alone as the head of the church.

We do not pray through Mary, saints, or come to the priest or the bishop and ask them to pray for us. They can pray with us, but each believer has the ability and the right, by the grace of God and the blood of Christ, to have direct access to the throne of God. And so, as Protestants, we believe in the priesthood of all believers.

We are intercessors, we are called to be intercessors, to stand like a priest between God and man, speaking to God on behalf of man in intercession, speaking to man on behalf of God, to expounding and explaining and sharing and preaching the word of God and applying the Lordship of Christ to all areas of life. We are called to offer ourselves as living sacrifices, living stones called to be living sacrifices. We are to sacrifice ourselves, our body, as a living sacrifice.

We sacrifice our time, our talents, our treasure, in seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We read in Romans 12 verse 2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that by testing you may be able to discern what is the will of God, what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Many Christians today are conformed to this world, and many think

that they must remove their minds instead of renew their minds.

We are called to have our minds renewed. R.C. Sproul's radio program for many years was called *Renewing Our Minds*. James Kennedy's radio program was *Truths That Transform*, both inspired from this same verse.

We must have our minds renewed, and we need to be transformed by the truths of Scripture, as we apply the Lordship of Christ to all areas of life. So in this passage in 1 Peter 2, we can see the distinctives of Livingstone Fellowship. Bible-based, Christ-centered, missionary, evangelistic, reformed, body, mind, and spirit, head, heart, and hands, putting feet to our faith, faith in action.

True love is seen in action. True love is measured by sacrifice. We are called to offer a sacrifice to God, a sacrifice of praise, and our whole bodies and lives to be living sacrifices to God.

And so we are called to be living stones and living sacrifices for God. We have a post-millennial eschatology of hope and victory, because Christ Jesus is the chief cornerstone. He is the head of the Church.

He is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. He is a conqueror. It is impossible to wage war against God and win.

It is impossible for God's Church to fail in its mission ultimately. God has not predestined defeat to His people. The Lord who gave us the Great Commission will ensure that the Great Commission is fulfilled.

The Lord will not return until His Church has completed its task and made disciples of every nation, teaching obedience to all things that He has commanded by His grace, by His Spirit, through His Word. The Lord God has given the prophecies. He will ensure that they are fulfilled.

We are not working at uncertainty, nor are we afraid for the result. Christ must rule and reign until there is not one square centimeter of the universe not under the Lordship of Christ. Satan's cause is doomed.

All those aligned with Satan will be defeated and ashamed. Those who stand with Christ and stand for Christ will experience the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of God. It was this post-millennial eschatology of victory which inspired Dr. David Livingstone, William Carey, and all the great missionaries of the greatest century of mission, the 19th century missionary movement.

The most eloquent sermon is not what we can say but what we do. It is sacrificial service as we put feet to our faith. It is not enough to talk the talk.

We have to walk the walk. And as Christians, as Livingstones, as Reformed believers, it is so vital that we do, we act, we apply in our daily life the principles that we proclaim and believe. The whole church must take the whole gospel to the whole world.

Let the whole world hear His word. This is the theme of how many of the Psalms. We have been set free to serve Christ.

1 Peter 2 verse 9 says, But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2 verse 21 says, For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in His footsteps. Christ Jesus is our example.

We are not following the examples of any normal human beings. We are following the example first and foremost of Christ. He is the standard.

The Bible is our authority and Christ is our standard and our example. And He leads from the front. It has been over 14 years since Livingstone Fellowship was launched.

As a Christian fellowship, praying the Psalms, the prayer book of the Bible, the hymn book of the Bible, the book that is not only the largest book in the Bible but the most quoted book of the Old Testament in the Gospels. Christ quoted more from the Psalms than from any other section of the Old Testament. And so we have been singing traditional Christian hymns, the treasury of the Church, focused on Bible teaching, preaching to every book in the Bible, and singing and praying the Psalms.

So what have we accomplished in the last 14 years? Well, numerous books have been published containing the sermons prepared and proclaimed at Livingstone Fellowship, including two editions of the Ten Commandments, God's perfect law of liberty, which has also been translated into Afrikaans, Die Tiengeboer Kutse voor Mark Tibet van Vrijheid. We have also produced Answering Skeptics, which has now also been translated into Afrikaans and is soon to be printed and published. And this series answered 14 great challenges, attacks which Christians face.

These sort of things. And they were first preached in Livingstone Fellowship, then dealt with on radio, dealt with as articles, and then became chapters in this book. What proof do you have that the Bible is the Word of God? So glad someone would ask that question.

How can a good God allow evil? Why does God not stop all the suffering? But aren't all religions the same? There is no God. How do you know there's a God? How can a loving God condemn anyone to hell? How do you know that Jesus is alive? How can I know that Jesus is the Messiah? Is the doctrine that Trinity really taught in the Bible? What about the Inquisition? What about the Crusades? What about hypocrites in the church? Isn't religion just a crutch for the weak? These are just some of the 14 key questions that I've come across time and again in the field, on the streets, universities, radio financial programs. And so we crafted condensed, effective responses to each of these attacks, and these are now available in audio, MP3, and as a book, Answering Skeptics.

And then there was practical discipleship, which has been translated also into Afrikaans, and is just awaiting funds to print and publish. Practical discipleship, working our way through a whole range of practical issues that affect our daily life, leading all the way up to four chapters on revival at the end of the book. A series of firm foundations for our faith booklets, including the Apostles' Creed, Biblical Faith and Modern Counterfeits, The Authority of Christ on the First Day Sabbath, and The Wonders of Water, particularly designed to have a point of contact with people standing in line, collecting water at these water points during Cape Town's water restriction crisis.

And we've produced booklets on these various things. The First Day Sabbath, The Authority of Christ, very important because the amount of people who are trying to argue that Saturday should be the day of rest and worship, and not Sunday, has increased. It's vital that we get back to giving the biblical answer to these.

And so audiovisual box sets of all these preaching project series were also produced. But the largest project, the Livingstone Fellowship, was preaching through every book in the Bible. Very ambitious, as part of the Reformation 500 Back to the Bible project.

This was a six-year project involving studying, summarizing, and producing sermons in every book of the Bible. Some books are quite small. Others are colossal, like Psalms and Isaiah.

Some are really difficult, like Revelation. But this six-year project resulted in sermons shaped into chapters for the Old Testament Survey book and the New Testament Survey, and audiovisual box sets with sermons in every one of these books, summarizing them. And these have also been uploaded on Sermon Audio.

And we now have over 800 sermons and lectures on our Sermon Audio page on the web. And the Livingston Fellowship website, just last year, had 1,477 visitors. Our social media, far more than that.

Social media, Livingston Fellowship Facebook page reached 10,353,000 people, with 15,774,000 total impressions or views, with over 3.5 million engagements, that's likes, comments, or shares, from 1,429,000 engaged users, that's people who comment, react, or share. So, we've definitely taken our preached sermons, the printed, and we've gone on to the World Wide Web, we've gone on to social media platforms, and so we've reached people as far afield as Mongolia, South Korea, Trinidad, and places that many people have struggled to find on the map. I remember laughing about Mongolia, and out of Mongolia, but we've even had correspondence from people from Mongolia.

Livingston Fellowship integrated Way of the Master, Ten Commandments-based evangelism, and evangelism explosion, into our program. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. In fact, so much so, that even Ray Comfort, Kirk Cameron, and Todd Freel, wrote endorsements for my Ten Commandments books, enthusiastic at the expansion of that, because they've shown the way of using the Ten Commandments as a basis for evangelism, the schoolmaster that leads us to Christ, that we can be justified by faith, and they've found our Ten Commandments series very helpful in laying an even more solid foundation to bring conviction of sin, to show people the need of a saviour, and how we should live our lives in gratitude after our salvation.

James Kendi's Evangelism Explosion has been a key part of our work from the beginning. Most of our members completed the Biblical Worldview Summit and the Great Commission Course, and most Livingston Fellowship members took part in March for Life to Parliament, I don't know if there's any other congregation that can say that, and Missions and Memorials each year. And we integrated Sanctity Life Sunday and the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church service into our calendar.

Every year we observe Good Friday, Resurrection Sunday, Ascension Day, Pentecost Sunday, Reformation Day, and Thanksgiving. And many times I've had people contact me from different parts of the world saying they're so grateful they didn't know what to preach on this event or that, and to get ready, good that they could work on Ascension Day and Reformation Day and all these others. And of course many pastors, if they've been in the church many years, trying to find new ways of looking at vital anniversaries like Resurrection Sunday and Good Friday and Christmas, they were delighted to see some of the resources we put out.

Many of our Christian Action Network churches all over Africa said how helpful they found having these Bible surveys and these sermons, which many of these people, most pastors in Africa, have no formal Bible college or theological training, and so to provide them with accessible materials is helpful. In this, I was inspired by first of all Bishop Stephen Bradley, who used to make simple sermons available and used to mail them to Church of England pastors throughout Zululand and South West Africa, Rhodesia, to guide them. And of course that's what Heinrich Willinger did back in Switzerland.

When entire Catholic dioceses were converted to the Protestant faith, what do you do with the priests? Here they've only been taught Catholicism. How can they be integrated into a Reformed church? And so Heinrich Willinger preached and published 52 sermons called his Decades. So if you preach to each one of these sermons each Sunday, they cover all the main doctrines of discipleship and the Reformation.

And so to be able to take people already in the pulpit and give them a grid, of course there are the Confessions, of course there's the Catechisms, those are all very helpful. But the Decades of sermons of Heinrich Willinger and the sermons of Bishop Stephen Bradley were very helpful. And so I've seen a key part of our work to make simple Bible-based sermons applicable to every area of life available to pastors throughout Africa.

And there's no doubt that's very used on the William Carey Bible Institute page, Livingston Fellowship page, and others. Not only that, but regular outreaches and work parties, especially Fellowship of Africa, were a regular part of our program, as were the prayer vigils and outreaches outside the board trees. So we praise God for His grace, for His mercy.

We have celebrated the Lord's Supper, wedding services, dedications, and baptisms. We have conducted funerals and memorial services. We have enjoyed carol services and samba members, like Daniel Andronorafsang, Handel's Messiah, and other classics, at special events.

We have assembled boxes with love for pensioners in Zimbabwe, and we've mobilized work parties and donations of clothes and food and blankets to the needy in the Cape Peninsula. We've sent out missionaries to Mission Field, as far afield as Mozambique and Angola, Zambia and Zimbabwe, Congo, Sudan, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania. Some of our previous members have spent years in the field, like Tim and Ashley Keller, based up in Kabwe and Zambia.

We've celebrated the Calvin 500, Livingston 200, and Reformation 500 events, using these momentous milestones to teach church history, to inform and inspire and involve Christians in working for Reformation, praying for revival, calling churches back to the Bible, and to seek to motivate and mobilize more believers to make Christ's great commission our supreme ambition. In 2005, as the vision for Livingston Fellowship Reformation Society came to me, I was on a five-week, 11-country mission to Europe, which included everywhere from Northern Ireland through to Romania and Poland, Germany, and the highlights are getting to Wittenberg in Germany, and to Geneva and Zurich in Switzerland. And standing at the Reformation sites, it started to gel in my head.

We're not that far away, just 12 years away from Reformation 500, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. So for 12 years before 2017, I was promoting Reformation 500, and I got to Geneva and saw John Calvin, born 1509. We're only four years away from 2009, 500 years since John Calvin was born.

And so, interestingly enough, the Calvin 500 did get traction. We had Americans, Canadians, South Africans, people from South Korea, even coming together in Geneva, and a very good week there, really special time. The Livingston 200 involved more ambitious activities, traveling to the 12 countries where Livingston had ministered, we had pioneered the Gospel, as far up as Rwanda and Burundi and Nicaragua and Tanzania.

Although our team cheated, we drove and flew where Livingston walked. But still, we distributed three and a half tons of Bibles and books in remote villages and areas where Livingston had ministered, retracing much of his steps, and ended with a Livingston 200 admissions conference at Victoria Falls, at the town of

Livingston, covered by Zambian national TV, Livingston local TV, with the mayor's office present at Victoria Falls on the 16th of November, which is the anniversary of Livingston's discovery, naming, sketching, measuring Victoria Falls. And that was a great and inspiring effort.

And I must say, the Livingston 200 did catch a lot of enthusiasm. There was a lot of people throughout Africa who were, we had people from as far as Nigeria coming to join us for the Livingston 200 event in Zambia. The Reformation 500 in Wittenberg, Germany had the chance of conducting Reformation 500 events and conferences as far afield as Zululand and Zambia, all the way over to America, Belgium, Netherlands.

The best turnout on our Reformation 500 year, what surprised most people, it was in the Netherlands. 960 people came for a weekend camp to celebrate the Reformation 500. I thought the people in the Netherlands were closed to the gospel, but when I mentioned this, they said, oh, but you're in a Bible belt here.

I didn't know the Netherlands had a Bible belt. Very strong, dynamic Christian community still going strong in the Netherlands. To be part of that was very special.

And to have the Eurochoir, not only in Cape Town, but also at Wittenberg, at the end of our conferencing, very special. Through special services, radio broadcasts, articles and postings and publications, we educated and we enlisted many to focus on our Christian heritage and to be inspired by examples of excellence. One great quote that we learnt from the 1859 revival in Ireland was, can you not do something more for God? Can you not do something more for God? That was the challenge that led to the prayer meeting which led to the revival outbreak in Northern Ireland which spread all over.

And that's been a constant challenge. On the night that I was converted, the preacher, Reverend Rex Matthews said, Christ died for you. What have you done for him? And this kind of challenge needs to be given again and again.

The cross is a symbol of our faith. The vertical beam can represent our relationship to God. He speaks to us through the Bible, Old and New Testament.

We speak to him through prayer. Like the wings of a bird, there's two aspects to prayer. There's prayer and praise.

It's not just a shopping list. It's not just a request. It's adoration, thanksgiving, worship, praise.

Prayer and Bible study. We're rooted in the Bible and we should respond to God in prayer and praise. The horizontal beam of a cross represents our relationship to others.

We should reach out to believers in fellowship and reach out to unbelievers in evangelism. So these are the four essential aspects of any balanced scholarship. Bible study, prayer, evangelism, and worship.

And worship should unite it all. It's at the heart which holds it all together. Everything should be done to the glory of God alone.

Soli Deo Gloria. The fifth solo of the Reformation Battle Chorus. So inspired by the sacrificial service of missionary pioneer Dr. David Langston, let us strive to be faithful to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Steadfast in his service. Inspired by the eschatology of victory. Putting feet to our faith.

Making Christ's great commission our supreme ambition. To make disciples of all nations, to teach obedience to all things he has commanded. Reformed in our doctrine.

Missionary in our vision. Optimistic in our view of the end times. Praying the Psalms.

Praying against evil. Reading and preaching to the whole word of God. Singing the great hymns of the faith.

Christ shall have dominion. Jesus shall reign. Stand up, stand up for Jesus.

Fight to get a part of faith. Who is on the Lord's side? From Greenland's icy mountains, a mighty fortress is our God. These are foundations.

This is what God has called us to. And so as we look at this passage that we started with, it comes more alive when you think of it in this light. Coming to him is to a living stone.

Rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious. You also as living stones are being built up a spiritual house. A holy priesthood.

To offer up spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone elect and precious. And he who believes on him will not be put to shame.

Therefore to you who believe, he is precious but to those who are disobedient the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. Let's pray. Lord Jesus we thank and praise you for the solid rock foundation that you are for each one of us.

We thank you Lord God for your word. It is the truth that sets us free. It is the rock solid foundation of our faith.

It is our shield. We thank you Lord God that your word is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. That faith comes through hearing and hearing by the word of God.

We praise you Lord that your word never returns void. It always accomplishes what you sent it out to accomplish. Lord may continue to work through the word of God preached, proclaimed, printed, uploaded and available digitally, whether audio, video, or in social media platforms.

We thank you Lord God for the seed that has been sown. And we continue to pray Lord for a great harvest of righteousness from your word in our lives and the lives of others. We thank you Lord God for our friends, associates, allies, fellow Christians worldwide.

We pray Lord God that you may continue to strengthen our fellowship with your people worldwide for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. We pray this in Jesus precious and holy name. Amen.

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