

1 Peter Chapter 2 v 4 - 9

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Please would you turn with me to the first letter of Peter and chapter 2. We've completed chapter 1 and the first part of chapter 2, the first few verses, but we're going to read chapter 2 from verse 1 through to verse 10.

And to remind you again, here is Peter writing to different groups of Christians, different churches spread throughout what we know now as sort of Turkey area, and they were being persecuted, they were being put to the test, as it were, for following Jesus.

They had many trials, we're told, difficulties, and they needed much encouragement. And so we've been looking at how Peter has encouraged them and how he's encouraged them particularly in recognizing their purpose, why they exist, and what it is that God has called them to.

And we saw that particularly in verse 15, just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. And we've been thinking about how Peter has unpacked that truth, being holy, and we're going to continue that later this evening, God willing.

So let's pick up from chapter 2, verse 1. We have the church, the New Church Bible, 1218 is the page, 1218. Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

[1 : 29] Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you've tasted that the Lord is good.

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 light.

[2 : 55] 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.

Let's pray together, shall we? Let us pray. Almighty God, our loving and gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are the God who has made himself known to us.

That once, as we've been reading, we were not a people. Once we did not know you, once we were far from you, alienated from you, lost, blind, dead in our sins.

These are all descriptions the Bible gives of people in their natural condition, the way that we're born. Lord, with that sinful nature. And Lord, we do recognize that this is what we see around about us in the world today.

Not just in the United Kingdom, but throughout the world. We see men and women lost. Men and women wandering, going this way and that. Caught up and tied up and tangled up in all sorts of sin, evil and wickedness.

[4 : 11] With an unwillingness and an inability, even, to change and to be free. We thank you, O Lord, that we were such ourselves.

Except that by your mercy you came to us. And you showed mercy upon us. You saw us, Lord, in our lost condition. You saw us in our sin. You saw us in the wickedness of our own hearts.

So much so that, Lord, you declare that we were your enemies because we sought to live against you. Rebellious against your laws and commands. Pleasing only ourselves.

We thank you that in spite of the judgment we deserve, you showed us mercy. You stooped down in your love and you raised us up. You stretched out your hands, those hands, Lord Jesus, which had been pierced at the cross.

And you took hold of us and lifted us up out of the mire, out of the slime and the scum of sin. And you placed us upon a rock.

[5 : 16] On that rock of life, that living stone. So that we might sing your praises and glorify your name. We thank you, O Lord, that that is your desire for many, many more people in our world today.

And we thank you that we can pray for our nation at this time. A nation in many ways which is going through flux and change. Will we stay in the European Union or not?

Will we open our doors to more migrants or not? What shall we do with the interest rate? Have we come out of the recession? All these questions flying here and there.

We thank you again, O Lord, our God, that in the midst of these things, your great desire and longing is for men and women and boys and girls to be brought out of darkness into light.

We thank you that we are just one of many churches around the UK. Yes, Lord, thousands of churches and thousands of believers who love you and who have been saved and who want that message to be made known.

[6 : 15] And we pray that you would equip us and help us to do that work. We thank you for the work of United Beach Mission. We thank you for those preparations and plans that are being made for dozens and dozens of beach missions and other opportunities for outreach in the country.

Thank you for the opportunity of those two weeks of mission here in Whitby in the summer. We again pray, O Lord, that you would raise up labourers for this work, that many would want to be involved, that many would want to share the good news of Jesus, and that, Lord, you would indeed be preparing hearts and minds for those weeks.

We thank you too, Lord, that there will be many camps and young people's clubs and children's Bible clubs going on, and being prepared for even now. And again we pray, Lord, that you would be preparing hearts and lives, that when they hear the good news of Jesus, that they might not reject it or harden their hearts to it, that he might not be to them a stumbling stone, but he might be the one who lifts them up, and that they are lifted up into your wonderful mercy and grace.

We thank you again that not only are we a part of your church in the United Kingdom, but we are one with those believers throughout the world. And we thank you again that we stand with those who are persecuted.

We say, O Lord, that we are one with them. We pray for, again, peace in the Middle East, in Syria particularly. We again pray for your people, particularly those in North Korea, struggling under such tyranny and oppression.

[7 : 51] We pray there, O Lord, that you would give them such mighty strength, boldness and grace. For those, Lord, even now imprisoned, Lord, in many parts of the world, simply because they love you, Lord Jesus, may they know that they are loved by the Lord Jesus too.

May they not be afraid, but may they be those that are witnesses of that love to their guards, to their torturers even, that, Lord, again, you would be merciful to change those hearts, which at this moment are so stony hard.

We thank you that you speak, O Lord, and that you live and that you are active. And we pray again as we come to your word in a few moments that you would speak to us and give us ears to hear, minds to understand, and hearts to believe.

Most of all, lives to obey and act upon your word with faith and, Lord, with holiness. For we ask these things as we call upon you and look to you now, in Jesus' name.

Amen. If you'd like to find in your Bibles the chapter we looked at and read this earlier on, that's chapter 2 of 1 Peter, page 1218 in the Red Church Bible.

[9 : 11] That will be helpful. During the Victorian period, particularly in the United Kingdom, men who had great wealth, landowners, industrialists and so on, got into the habit of building structures on their land, usually on a hilltop, in a Roman or a Grecian style, with pillars and so on.

And it was to show off just how much wealth they had, that they could do these things. Each one of these buildings, these sort of mock temples, many of them were, had no practical use whatsoever.

They didn't work as housing for people or even shelter for animals. And for that reason, they are more commonly called follies, a foolishness, just something and nothing.

Well, the Church of Jesus Christ, we're told here, is a spiritual building, a spiritual house. But it is anything but a folly.

The last thing on earth that the Church is, is a folly. Although God has designed it, and He has patterned it for His own glory, to show off in one sense His brilliance, His grace, His mercy, His goodness, yet the reality is that the Church of Jesus Christ is the most beneficial institution in the world.

[10:49] It is of the greatest practical usefulness, more than any other building. To belong to the Church of Jesus Christ is not only to be part of the most beautiful structure that God has made, but also to be of the greatest blessing to humanity.

That's something which you can realize by reading anything of history. Even just that very snippet that Richard spoke of showed us that the abolition of slavery, that hideous crime within the United Kingdom, was because Christians, the Church, sought to put it to an end.

Peter has been speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ, and particularly in the previous verses, referring to Him as a Lamb without blemish, in reference to His sacrifice, His giving of Himself to atone for the sins of His people.

But now we have this change, this change of imagery, from a Lamb given in sacrifice, to a temple in which sacrifices are made.

There's a natural and logical step, you can see in Peter's thinking. And that Christ Himself is the foundation stone of that very temple.

[12:14] But the theme, as I said at the outset of our reading, is the same one that we've seen throughout chapter 1. The theme that the believer, their life is to be one that is both internally and externally holy.

The Christian and the Church are to be inwardly and outwardly holy. We are holy, and we read that before, because we have been purchased for God's possession.

To be holy means just that, to be set aside, to belong, given over for God's use and purpose. That's why Jesus redeemed us, we're told there, in verse 18, from the empty way of life we lived, so that we might belong to God, so that we might be His possession, that we might be His people.

But, that inward reality, that spiritual reality, of who we are as God's people, holy, is something which is to be seen and manifest in our daily actions, in the way that we live and behave and talk and act as individuals and as a church, because we are no longer those who conform to the pattern of this world and to those who live in ignorance of God.

We saw that earlier on in chapter 114. Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. We saw last week, particularly, that the primary way in which the Christian, the church, is to be different, the way that the church and the Christian is to be holy, is that we are to be a people who are marked by love.

[13:59] And so, Peter says very strongly in verse 22, Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the law, so that you have sincere love for one another, love one another deeply from the heart.

We are those who have been born again, we're told, of the living and enduring word of God. A seed has been planted in our hearts, and that seed is a seed of love, which grows and manifests itself in our lives, going deeper and deeper.

And so now we come to this changing illustration, this illustration of a spiritual house, a temple, which we can liken it to.

Of course, you know very well that in the Old Testament, God gave instructions to Moses, first of all, in the wilderness, that they should make a tabernacle, this great structure, this tented structure, in which sacrifices were brought to God by priests.

Solomon was given permission by God to make that a permanent fixture. The temple, this incredible building, which you can read about the construction of, in 2 Samuel.

[15:08] A temple, again, which had gold and ornate fixtures, something which was to represent God's presence in the world, and amongst his people. And so here, we find when we get to the New Testament, we see that God does not need a building.

In fact, Paul says that very clearly in Acts, in chapter 17, as he's preaching to Athens, and he sees all the temples, and he says, God doesn't live in a building. He doesn't need these things.

He fills the universe. No building can contain him. The temple of the Old Testament has been changed and transformed to not being a building, but being a people, the church.

And so we find that, again and again, in the New Testament, we're told that each of us, I believe, is a temple of the Holy Spirit. And here we have it again. The church, we're told, is being built into a spiritual house, a temple for God.

So what's the purpose? What's the purpose of the church of Jesus Christ? What's the purpose of this building that God has created? Well, we see there in that verse that we are to be a spiritual house.

[16:18] We've already mentioned that, this temple. We are to be a holy priesthood. We'll come to these things later. And we are to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

So the church, and if you're a Christian, part of the church, that is God's purpose for you. To build you into a spiritual house, to make you a holy priesthood, and to offer through you spiritual sacrifices.

But let's just consider, first of all, this spiritual house. Let's consider the materials that God uses to construct his church. What is the church made of?

What is it made of? Well, of course, the key to the whole of the building is to be found in its foundation. So we're told that Christ, the living stone there, in verse 4, and we see later on as well, where Peter quotes from Isaiah, same words that Jesus had quoted himself as well earlier.

See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone. And later on, verse 7, the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

[17:40] And in that way, Jesus Christ is described. Each of those is pointing to him, a living stone, a cornerstone, and then later on in verse 8, a stone and a rock.

Elsewhere in the Bible, that's clearly Jesus, because we read there, didn't we, from Ephesians 2, Jesus, the chief cornerstone. 1 Corinthians 3, verse 11, He's the only foundation upon which any person can build.

Jesus is this rock, this stone, and we see that he has a very special connection to the church of Jesus Christ. He is the very foundation of the church.

And then we see as well, we'll come back to that, we see as well in verse 8 that he is called a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. That's how Jesus is viewed by the world, by those who are not Christians, those we're told who do not believe, those who do not count him as precious, those who reject him.

builders, builders, the stone the builders rejected, verse 7, they stumble because they disobey the message. So to them, Jesus is but a stumbling block in their way.

[19:00] He's someone who gets in the way of them getting on with their lives. He's an intrusion. Jesus Christ is someone who really, they would rather was just put to one side.

They don't mind him being there as just as long as he doesn't interfere with their lives. And so they step around him and step over him as much as they can. He is an obstacle.

They want to build their lives their way. They want to go their own path. Jesus is causing them to feel uncomfortable about their sins. He's causing them to feel unhappy about the choices they made in life.

He is the one that they do not wish to obey. There are many people like that in the world today. Many people hear the wonderful message of Jesus, of his love, of his care, of his salvation, of his death upon the cross for their sins.

Many people who hear the message of the gospel, but they deny it. The truth is that sadly, because they deny that truth, they will bring upon themselves a very, very bad fall.

[20:08] Do you notice that? He is a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. Jesus said himself in Matthew 21, when referring to people's reaction to him, he said, anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.

See, there's just two ways in which we can view and relate to the Lord Jesus Christ. Either we reject him, disobey him, and see him as a stumbling block in the way of our lives.

In such a case, then one day he will come again, and he will fall upon us in judgment. That eternal judgment, which the Bible calls hell, which is to be forever cut off, separated, punished.

Or else there is to make him the foundation of our lives, to build our lives upon him, to recognize him as the one in whom we need to put our faith and trust, to recognize him as the rock, the eternal, everlasting, faithful God.

That's what the Christian is. That's what the member of the church of Jesus Christ is. You cannot be a member of the church of Jesus Christ unless, as is described there, you count Jesus to be precious to you.

[21 : 32] He's the most lovely person in all the world. You count him as the one in whom you believe and have put your faith, knowing that he is the only one who can forgive your sins.

He's the one who died for you and suffered for you. He's the one who, indeed, you've placed all your faith as Lord and King. Is he your foundation? Is your life built upon Jesus?

Is your life built upon him as the cornerstone? Jesus is the living stone upon whom the whole of the church is built and receives its strength.

We're all aware, aren't we, of the importance of a foundation to any building. A house that we purchased recently, when it had a survey, was found that the front porch was leaning and coming away from the rest of the building.

The conclusion for the cause of that was this, it had a shallow foundation and so had to be rebuilt with a deeper foundation. And so Jesus is here spoken of as the living stone, the cornerstone of the church, the foundation of the church.

[22 : 39] How is that so? Very quickly and simply. First of all, Jesus is the foundation because it all begins with him. It all starts with him. You can't build a building unless you, first of all, lay a foundation.

Nobody ever built a roof for a house before they'd built the foundation. That has to start at the bottom and work your way up. The roof needs walls to hold it up and the walls need a foundation upon which to build.

And so the Lord Jesus Christ is the author of the church. He's the one who initiated the church. In Hebrews in chapter 12, he is spoken of as the author and the perfecter of our faith.

It all begins with him, the Alpha and the Omega. The origins of the church are not with man. It wasn't Peter who decided to build the church or Paul. And the same with any other local church as well.

Every local church has to have its beginnings with Christ. It has to come from his initiative, his desire. The church is built upon Jesus Christ.

[23 : 46] It begins with him. It is also built on him. Just as the foundation is the place upon which the bricks and the stones are placed, so the church is built upon the life and the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know that parable, don't we, very well, of the two builders, the wise builder, the foolish builder. Jesus makes it very clear that those who do not build their lives upon his word are going to find that their lives will come falling down around their ears.

Only a life built on Christ will last and will give eternal life. And so the death, the life, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only basis for a life lived in peace with God.

An eternal life. The church is built upon Jesus Christ. As we read there in Ephesians, built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, those who brought us the word of God, the cornerstone being Jesus Christ.

What we believe about him is important. We can't believe whatever we like. We can't think whatever we like about Jesus Christ. We must build upon and have a saving faith and be a church that is built upon Christ.

[25 : 01] Thirdly, as well, we see that the church is not only built upon Christ, but it's born up by him. It's supported by him. It's born upon his shoulders.

Every single stone of the construction of the church is carried by Jesus. That's one of the wonderful things about being a Christian, being part of the church of Jesus Christ.

It means that Christ carries us, he sustains us, he supports us, he bears with us. The weight of responsibility for the church is upon his shoulders.

He's the one that gives the church its stability and its security. That's why it's absolutely essential that only those who are connected with Jesus can be part of the church.

You cannot be part of the church simply by going to and building in which Christians meet. You cannot be part of the church simply by being baptized or reciting a creed or putting your name upon a piece of paper or putting your name into a register.

[26 : 06] You have to be someone whose life is built upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And the wonderful thing is that when your life is built upon him, then there is stability to the church.

And for us as a local church and for every local church, if we want stability, if we want the church to be able to be secure and to be strong, then we have to continue to be built upon Christ.

We mustn't deviate from that. Fourthly here, of course, we see that the church is built by Jesus Christ. He begins it, it's built upon him, it's born by him, and it's built by him.

Matthew 16, those words that he spoke to Peter and the disciples, verse 18, I will build my church. Church is not built by pastors or evangelists or missionaries.

It's not built by committees or elders or deacons or church members. It's Jesus who adds stone upon stone. See here in verse 4 and 5, as you come to him, that's Christ, verse 5, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house.

[27 : 15] He is still building his church. He is taking those stones, odd-shaped and misshaped, and putting them in just the right place.

When I was 17, I knocked a wall down in my car. It wasn't my fault, it wasn't going fast, it was icy. And going around the corner near my home in Guernsey, it was one of those very few days we ever had ice.

It happened to be the day that I was driving my car and I slid across and knocked down this wall. It was only a small wall of about 2 or 3 feet. Anyway, when I got back home and knocked the dent out of the wing of my car, my dad said, right, we're going to have to go and rebuild that wall.

So he came with and helped me. Well, he did it mainly, I think, and I just picked up the stones. It was a granite wall, so it was all different shapes of stone. And so, we put it back together.

It's still standing. 30 years later, amazing. That's only because my dad built it, not me. But there, you have to like the dry stone walls we see around and about. There's a scale in putting the right stone in the right place so that the whole thing holds together.

[28 : 23] That's what God has done. Here's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12. He's talking about the body, the church as a body, but it's the same principle. God has placed the parts, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

So if you're a member of the church, a local church, God has placed you in that part of the church because he wants you there. Because that's where you fit. You may not feel like you fit.

You may feel you're a little bit rough and awkward and stick out a bit. But that's where God has placed you. Acts chapter 2, verse 47, the Lord added to their number, that's the church, daily, those who are being saved.

The church is built by Jesus. Notice that. It didn't say the apostles added to their number or Philip the evangelist added to their number. The Lord added to their number.

He was the one who was building the church. He was saving. A stone and a brick by itself does not make a building, does it? It's only when it's added together.

[29 : 25] It's only when it's united to those other stones that together they grow into a house. As Christians, dear friends, we are created to be part of a church.

To be part of the church of Jesus Christ, universal, but to be part of the church locally as well. God adds to his church and builds his church.

So we see that Jesus is the foundation. We see that he is spoken of here as the living stone. As you come to him, the living stone. How do we need to understand Jesus as the living stone?

When we want to think of, when we talk about something being lifeless, we say it's stone dead.

Because there's nothing as inanimate, unliving, if I'm going to put it that way, as a stone.

Jesus is described as the living stone. Why? Well, because of course he is alive. He is the foundation, but he is living. He is one who died and rose again.

[30 : 31] He is living. He is alive. The Bible says he ever lives to make intercession for us. He is always alive. Jesus is alive today. But he is the living stone because he, particularly in this instance, supplies life.

As you come to him, the living stone, rejected by humans but chosen by God, you also like living stones. It's very important that Peter uses this language.

First of all, because of course it's only our connection with Jesus that makes us alive. It's only because he has life and gives us life that we are alive. We are not naturally, spiritually alive.

That's what the Bible makes very clear. Sin has robbed us of spiritual life so that we are dead, Ephesians 2 says, dead in our trespasses and sins. There's no spiritual life.

There's no spark. People talk about that. Oh, well in every human being there's the spark of the divine. No. That's not true. And the reason it's not true is not because I say it, it's because the Bible

says it.

[31 : 37] No, it says that we are dead to God. Sin has completely smothered any life, spiritual life, in our souls so that we cannot come to God or seek God or know God or hear God or see God or live for God except that God puts life within us.

That's why Jesus uses the phrase being born again. Why Paul talks about being a new creation. Why even here Peter talks about this fact in verse 3. In his great mercy he's given us new birth. And why here in verse 23 you've been born again. It's not some catchy phrase that people have invented on the other side of the pond. It's something that the Bible says. And if you're a Christian the only way you're a Christian is because you have become a living stone. You were dead now you're alive. And it's Jesus who's given you that life. But also it's so important for us to understand that we see here that Peter says you are living stones like he is the living stone. That's why we are Christians because he is the Christ.

[32 : 46] In every sense and way being a Christian is someone who is like the Lord Jesus Christ. Being a Christian is to become a little Christ to be someone like him.

That's why we read earlier on we're given that instruction in verse 15 as just as he who called you is holy so be holy in all you do for it is written be holy because I am holy.

We're not holy in of ourselves because we make ourselves holy we're only holy because God is holy and we're united with him and therefore we are his children and we bear his image and his likeness and so it is with Christ.

He is the living stone so we have become living stones. And that makes sense of what the purpose is of the church as we see it here in these verses.

Notice that we are to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. The only way that we can do those things and the only thing that makes sense of us as a church and as Christians is that our lives reflect Jesus' life.

[33 : 59] Our ministry reflects Jesus' ministry. So we are a holy priesthood. Why? Because Jesus is the one and only great high priest.

It's one of the wonderful themes that runs all the way through the book of Hebrews. It's the reason why throughout the Old Testament we have this strange teaching to us of priests and high priests of sacrifices of offerings of temples of altars and so on.

And in Hebrews the writer there shows that all these things in the Old Testament are a picture pointing to and foreshadowing Jesus. For in chapter 4 and verse 14 he calls Jesus the great high priest who has replaced all the other priests.

What was the job of a priest? The job of a priest was to mediate between God and man. The priest was someone who acted on behalf of the people in other words bringing the required sacrifices and offerings of the people.

they couldn't bring them themselves they couldn't bring a lamb and offer it themselves they had to bring it to the priest he did it for them they mediated and they were the ones who God blessed the people through in assuring them of forgiveness and peace and so on.

[35 : 23] They mediated they stood in the middle in the gap as it were. Now Jesus was the great and the last priest in that sense because he is the one true and only mediator between God and man.

That's what Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 2.5 For there is one mediator between God and mankind the man Christ Jesus.

That's the reason that when Jesus was speaking to his disciples he told them this truth no one can come to the Father except through me. You can't get to God through any religion of your own making even if it's a worldwide religion even if there's tens of thousands of people who believe it because Jesus said you can only come to the Father through me.

Jesus is the way the truth and the life. He's the mediator by which we can come to God but here says Peter hold on you are to be a holy priesthood.

Who? Christians. Members of the church. Just as Jesus was a priest so we are if I can put it this way little priests.

[36 : 44] He was a great priest and we are lesser priests. Every single one of God's people. There is no such thing sorry to say and spoil your boat turn over your boat there's no such thing as clergy and laity.

There's no such thing as men and women being priests. It's a false title that they should not be given because every single Christian we are told here is part of a priesthood.

A great gathering of priests. You're a priest and I'm a priest. There's no non-priests in the church of Jesus Christ. Why?

Because wonderfully through Jesus we now do not need a mediator a priest to come to God only Jesus. You and I as Christians have this direct access to God.

We don't need a priest to offer sacrifices for us or a priest to tell us we're forgiven or a priest to act on our behalf. No the Bible makes it clear that we come to God as we are through Jesus.

[37 : 50] Mary the so-called saints they can't mediate for us because they are just like us sinners saved by God's mercy and they'd be the first to say so but people have sadly misunderstood God's blessing on their lives and elevated to the place they do not want and do not deserve.

They've put them in the place of Jesus but they can't be there. One mediator it's not Mary it's not a saint it's only Jesus Christ. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 18 for through him Jesus we have access to the Father by one spirit.

That's why it's so important that God's Holy Spirit lives in our hearts that we are living stones because then we can come to him pray to him talk with him share with him. What is it that we're to do then as a holy priesthood?

In what way are we to act as a holy priesthood? Well the Bible teaches us that the church of Jesus Christ is to act as a mediator between God and humanity.

Our job as Christians in the world and this is why the church is the greatest blessing that the world can ever know we are to act as those who can bring men and women to God what do I mean by that?

[39 : 19] Well first of all I mean this in that we can pray for the world you can't we can't there's we can't those who without the Lord Jesus Christ can't pray they can't come to God there's no access to God but the church those of us are Christians we can pray for the world we can pray for Syria we can pray for Iraq we can pray for those circumstances we can act on behalf of the world who should be praying to God but can't we can pray but also we see as well that we are meant to be God's ambassadors in the world why is it that when Jesus comes into the life of a person and saves us we don't immediately go to heaven lovely if we did wouldn't it why is it that God keeps his church on earth why is it that we're here well we're here to act and to live out God's requirements in the world we're to be the put it crudely the hands and feet of the Lord in the world we're to be those who bring the voice of God in the message of the gospel we're to be those who show the love of God in the way that we behave we are to be that advertisement for God to say come to him put your faith and trust in him how would men and women know

Christ except that the church acts on God's behalf to speak his word that's the privilege of every single Christian whoever we are we are to be those who mediate and who are the ones who stand in the gap so that men and women can come to Jesus and trust in him but finally then we see here dear friends that we are told that we are to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ again what are we doing we are following the example and the life of Jesus for Christ himself offered the one great sacrifice for sin he offered himself he offered himself in our place as a one-off unrepeatable sacrifice to be given on our behalf so that we might be forgiven in Hebrews in chapter 10 again Hebrews has much to say about not only Jesus as the great priest but also as the great sacrifice as well here's

Hebrews 10 when this priest Jesus had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins he sat down at the right hand of God verse 14 for by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy and then concerning sin he adds where these have been forgiven sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary the offerings and sacrifices that we are to bring to God the spiritual sacrifices of which Peter speaks here are not for sin there's nothing that you and I can do to add to what Jesus has done for our forgiveness not by being a good person not by saying our prayers not by giving to charity none of those things absolve us of our sins they never can the only way that our sins can be forgiven is because Jesus has paid the penalty taken the punishment our sins deserve he's paid the debt that we owe

God and he did that once for all for everyone who puts their faith in him at the cross all that we can do is receive that forgiveness and enjoy that forgiveness but we are to bring sacrifice and offering to God not for sin but those things that are acceptable and pleasing to him three things very briefly one of them we've already picked up on in the previous weeks we are to serve God by our loving

giving by our loving giving that's why we are to serve God in the world that's why we are to care for others that's why we are to give our gifts to God and to the work of the gospel in Philippians chapter 4 verse 18 Paul is talking about the giving of a church and the financial giving he says your gifts are a fragrant offering an acceptable sacrifice pleasing to God so we are to love that is a gift that God receives with thanksgiving secondly of course we are to praise God and to worship God in song that's why when we meet together we sing it's not only an encouragement to us which is nice it's not only because we enjoy good tune but particularly it's because we want to bring to God our praises Hebrews in chapter 13 and verse 15 says this through Jesus therefore let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise the fruit of lips that openly profess his name singing worshipping praising should should should please God and bring him honour and glory so we must be careful about how we sing what we sing the way we sing particularly the attitude with which we come to sing but ultimately dear friends ultimately there is one sacrifice one offering that every single person must bring and must give constantly and it's found here in Romans in chapter 12 he says therefore I urge you brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God this is your true and proper worship and when [45 : 14] Paul speaks about offering our bodies he means simply this that we're to give all that we are to God our whole life is to be an offering of sacrifice to him our whole life is to be lived to please him to serve him to honour him and indeed to bless him you are part of the local church this church has one reason this church does not exist for any other reason than that we should live for Christ that we should do all things that we might please him and glorify him each and every stone no matter how small big important key is a stone which is being built into a temple for God's praise are you part of the church of

Jesus Christ are you a living stone are you one whose life is given over to his service one who has received his Holy Spirit then you are part of the most beautiful structure in all the world we're going now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his presence in glory without fault and with great joy to the only God our saviour be glory majesty power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all time and today and forevermore Amen