

Will you join me in prayer this morning: God we pray for our nation, our communities. God, as your people we know that the world can never ever find what it so desperately seeks—apart from you. Will you help them find their way to your cross. Enable us to be your ambassadors in this world that is growing increasingly hostile, increasingly divided.

Today's Text

1 Peter 2:1-5

1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander. **2** Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow up into your salvation, **3** if **you have tasted that the Lord is good.** **4** As you come to him, a living stone—rejected by people but chosen and honored by God—**5** you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Over the last weeks: Peter has told us that we have been born again into a living hope, a sure salvation, and now calls us as the people of God in the world, having prepared our minds for action.

He now tells us that we are living stones being built into a holy priesthood. Let's take a few minutes and unpack that: We'll touch on two things today—how to grow up and how to be built up.

Vs. 1-3 encourage us to...

1. Grow up. There is an imperative in the text. A direct challenge to the individual and the congregation. **How do we grow up in the faith? God has gifted the church with leaders who equip the saints to grow into maturity—Christ the measure of that maturity.**

Ephesians 4:14 “Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit.

But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ.

From Peter and Paul, it is clearly God’s will that we mature in our faith. Grow up as we are transformed to the image and likeness of Jesus.

In order to grow up we must...

- **Rid ourselves of worldly vices.** The word “rid” means to cast off—throw off

- **Malice is malevolence; a mean-spirited or vicious disposition.**

Definition Racism: Racism is belief in the superiority of one’s own ethnicity and is the pernicious advocacy of one’s ethnicity above all others. You’re a racist if you believe that by virtue of nothing more than your skin color, you are superior to others.

Ethnocentrism: A perspective on other cultures **according to preconceptions originating** in the standards and customs of one's own culture. **Racism is malevolence It’s evil.**

The reason why it is so pernicious is because the Bible is clear about 3 truths:

(1) **All mankind of every ethnicity—are created in the image of God (Gen. 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; 15:49).** A human being is to be accorded the dignity, respect, and honor that an image-bearing person (regardless of the color or nationality) is granted by their spiritual constitution Which is the sacred word of God.

(2) **And all, Paul tells us—every ethnicity, every nationality, every single person on earth—ALL have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23).** And so every person needs to be justified, saved, rescued by faith in Christ alone.

(3) **God loves and desires to save all people of every ethnicity.** Jesus commissioned the Apostles to make disciples of “All ethnicities” (Mt. 28:19). Jn. 3:16 “For God so loved the World”

1 Tim. 2:1-4 (NIV) “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— ²for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” Racism is entirely out of place for the faithful because, all men are created in the image of God, all have sinned and fallen short of his glorious standard, and God desires that all men everywhere would come to be saved through knowledge of the truth.

- **Deceit: to take advantage of another through craftiness or treachery.** It is the art of distorting the truth, falsifying a claim so that you can manipulate and dupe others.
- **Hypocrisy:** The insincerity of pretending to be something you’re not. It’s not being at your best for public civility and peace. I frankly don’t want to see any of you at your worst. And you don’t want to see me at mine. To create a public impression that is at odds with one’s real, inner state or motivations. Jesus called the Pharisees and Scribes in the first century hypocrites because they were like play actors on a stage—performing the role of pious men, when inwardly they were full of every kind of wickedness.
- **Envy: jealous desire for what someone else has.** Covetousness is the desire for anything God says is off limits. You can’t have that, you can’t be that, you can’t do that. Envy is a permutation of that: to desire for what God has blessed someone else with but he hasn’t given to you.

Illus. Church Growth. Not long ago someone invited me to lunch and pressed me for the “keys to growth.” What are you guys doing?

We are called to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Peter 3:18).

You’re never a failure if you’re faithful to what God has given you and what he’s called you to.

You may be a family and God has blessed you with “B” and you see a family who has “A” and you begin think “Why do I only B. I want more AAAAA!!!”

That's envy. Instead, be faithful and productive with what God has given you, and thank God for what he's given others.

- Slander—*katalalia* in Greek consists of 2 words: *lalia* comes from *laleo* and it means “to cackle like a parrot. To prattle on and on, senselessly and thoughtlessly.” The word *kata* means *concerning*. It is character assassination by speaking ill, defaming the reputation. Lawyers were famous for doing this in order to win court cases before Roman courts. It can be done by direct accusation, or insinuation.
- Cultivate godly virtue. How do we do this? Like newborns, we are to crave the pure milk of the Word.
 - It begins with genuine believers who have tasted God's Word and discovered that the Lord is good. God's Word is profitable, useful, nourishing to the hungry soul that feeds on the pabulum, the empty calories of a culture drinking darkness to its dregs.

Colossians 3:11-17

¹¹ In Christ there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all. God is author of human diversity, and we are to enjoy our distinctiveness. But our differences are no longer walls of hostility, barriers to fellowship for those who are in Christ. Those who have embraced the cross. The cross binds us together regardless of our differences.

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen ones (elect), holy and dearly loved, put on compassion (display mercy for another's misfortune), kindness (the quality of being helpful), humility (without pretense), gentleness (soft-handedness; handling people like newborn babies; the quality of not being impressed by one's self-importance), and patience (calm under fire; the dignified bearing up under extreme duress or provocation), ¹³ bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. (to put up with the idiosyncrasies of another; to release them from a debt, obligation or accusation; refusing to hold their past against them) ¹⁴ Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful. (Our supreme obligation is wear love like a sash of honor, to adorn ourselves with a consciously loving

disposition towards brothers and sisters in the body. This love is the telic, perfected, consummated bond of unity that holds all together despite our quiriness, our points of view on non-essential matters, and our idiosyncrasies. God's peace—should run the show—rule your hearts. The community should be one of gratitude and peace.

Now how is it possible, what makes it possible for us to live in this kind of virtue, in an atmosphere of peace, unity, and gratitude?

¹⁶ **Let the word of Christ** (Word: is message, teaching, body of instruction) **dwell** (the NT term for tabernacle or temple 2 Tim. 1:14—“Guard the good deposit of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you”), **richly among you in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.** ¹⁷ **And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.** (This is how they educated the illiterate masses of Christians who were coming out of the Greek and Roman world. By embedding their narratives, doctrines and instruction into psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. These people were literally learning the Word of God and Christ in song form. Imagine your Bible study

The key to ridding ourselves of vice and sinful patterns and cultivating godly virtues and godly patterns is allowing the Word of God, the teachings of Jesus the Messiah to richly dwell, take up residence in our hearts, minds, and lives.

This is how we grow up. He says, grow up in the faith.

He says to the scattered exiles—the people of God to “Grow up,” And, be...

2. Built up.

1 Peter 2:4-5 “As you come to him, a living stone—rejected by people but chosen and honored by God—5 you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

This language appears so arcane and cultic. So passé and out of date. We have to educate ourselves about it.

Ephesians 4:15b-16 let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body **for building itself up** in love by the proper working of each individual part.”

- **We come to Christ**, the living foundation stone. This word “come to” means “**move towards; to approach a deity or to enter his presence as an authorized minister.**” Now, this is exactly how Peter uses the term—in a cultic context, not in a physical but priestly context. This is why all Reformed perspectives: such as Lutherans, Calvinists, Arminians, etc. teach the universal priesthood of the believer. He’s saying you have all been given the privilege of being priestly ministers to God and Christ.
- Christ, the living stone, rejected by men and chosen and honored by God. Christ is God’s elect. Christ is God’s foreknown and predestined Son. Christ is High Priest among a nation of priests. Christ is the High King, among a nation of co-heirs. Christ is the living foundation on whom is built...

We are a company of priests born again into the One who is The High Priest of God’s Family.

Heb. 2:17 “For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful **high priest** in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.”

Heb. 7:27 “Unlike the other **high priests**, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.”

- The Holy Priesthood.

- “Who offer Spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus.” A physical sacrifice is the slaughtering and offering of an actual animal, a bull, goat, lamb, turtle dove or pigeon—to cover sin.
- Jesus is the lamb of God slain for the sins of the world—to forgive and remove the blame, shame, and stain of sins.
- Our lives are the offering of spiritual sacrifices.
Rom. 12:1-2 “Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. ² Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.”

In light of the astonishing mercies of God on our behalf—offer your bodily life in sacrificial service as a holy, pleasing, act of genuine worship.

We offer our bodies to God when we refuse to use them to sin. When we refuse to allow our mouths to gossip, slander and destroy the character of another. When we maintain the purity of our marriage relationships—not allowing our affections to entice or drag us away from our spouses. When we refrain from violence and rage and doing others harm, or not using our hands to steal and loot that which does not belong to us.

We offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God when we conform to the pattern of godly behavior. We offer our bodies when we choose to be healthy in our diet and exercise habits. All of this requires self-control, sacrificial effort—and comes with a price-tag.

Illus. Getting up and exercising is going to cost me an extra hour of sleep.

- Choosing to eat healthy is going to cost me a couple of dozen sugary treats that I would like to consume throughout the day.
- Speaking well of my enemies and going the extra mile for my persecutors is going to cost me my desire for vengeance and retribution.

- Staying faithful to my wife is going to cost me some short-term gratification of the lusts of the flesh—that would actually result in my pain.

Every act of the body conforming it to the pattern of godliness will cost me some time, effort, and temporary gratification of the flesh. But it's worth it. Because we are priests serving a holy God and called to say no to the passions of the flesh.

We renew our minds that we may discern the wise path.

We choose to grow up in our faith and be built up by the Word. This choice necessarily commits us to saying no to worldly vice, yes to godly virtues—as God's priesthood and temple. Built up by Spirit in the Word for the world.

Pray.

1 Peter 5:10-11 The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. ¹¹ To him be dominion forever. Amen.