

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

LIVELY STONES

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

I Peter 2:5

The scripture often uses vivid language to describe things that are so glorious that common adjectives would fall short. For instance, when the apostle John is describing the streets of gold in the heavenly Jerusalem, he says that they are paved, not with common gold as we are accustomed to seeing, but with *"pure gold, as it were transparent glass."* (Rev 21:21) Solomon described an appropriate spoken word as *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."* (Pro 25:11) I have never seen apples of gold in pictures of silver but I understand that he is saying that such a word is most beautiful.

The Psalmist often mentions being hidden under the "shadow of HIS wings" (see Ps 17:8; 57: 1; 61:4; 63:7) We know that the LORD JESUS (who is the REVELATION of GOD, that ONE who can be seen) does not literally have wings. But the illustration is made so clear and full as we picture that tender care that the LORD has for HIS own.

So here in this passage Peter speaks of *"living stones"*. However, we know that stones are inanimate objects, devoid of life. Yet his illustration is quite vivid, in that it uses language to speak of an object in a way that would not normally make sense. Yet when we understand what he is saying, it is a most vivid picture and those who have been given eyes to see it can not help but rejoice..

He speaks first of that original LIVING STONE in verse 4 to which HIS elect are compared. This is that STONE which the builders rejected, ONE which is the CHIEF CORNERSTONE, elect and precious. HE is a STONE of stumbling and a ROCK of offense, upon which many have stumbled and fallen and upon whom IT shall fall and crush them to powder. (see I Pet.2:6-8; Mat.21:42-44)

HE is that LIVING STONE and from HIM comes all of the LIFE which the elect of GOD are given. HE said to HIS disciples, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* (John14:6) John went on to say, *"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."* (1John 5:11-12)

Apart from CHRIST no man, regardless of his religious sincerity, devotion and/or service to GOD can have eternal life. HE is that TREE of LIFE which was planted in the Garden of Eden and even now is the very sustenance of HIS elect as HE calls them to HIMSELF according to HIS sovereign purpose. (see John 1:12,13) HE alone possesses eternal life and has the power to give that life to as many as HE has chosen and placed among the race of

Adam. HE is the source and substance of their LIFE and presently sustains them even as HE has promised to do throughout the ages to come.

These “lively stones” are built into a “spiritual house”. I believe this is speaking of that church which HE said HE would build, which the gates of hell (i.e.; all of the powers of darkness) could not overcome. This is not a “church” which can be joined or which men have any control over. This is that *“general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven,”* (Heb 12:23) This is that body of CHRIST that Paul describes, *“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”* (Eph 1:22-23) This is that same place which the LORD spoke to the Samaritan woman about when HE said, *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”* (John 4:23) It is also one and the same with that prophesied by Jeremiah, *“After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”* (Jer 31:33-34)

These “lively stones” are placed there by the LIVING STONE. HE is a wise MASTER BUILDER who is building an edifice for HIS glory, and HE has chosen and formed the material that HE has desired to build this great structure out of. There is no wood, hay, or stubble here, but this is all rock hewn from HIS own quarry by HIS own hand. Even as the sound of a hammer was not heard in the building of Solomon’s temple, so there is none that can add to or take from this structure. *“Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it. (Psa 127:1)*

These “lively stones” are gathered together in various locations by HIM. The LORD has designed these assemblies (local churches) for the benefit of HIS elect. This body functions as every joint supplies that which the body lacketh. (see Eph.4:16) There are no superfluous parts of this body nor are some parts of the body more important than others. (see I Cor.12:14-27) This body has one HEAD and needs not another. (see Eph.1:22)

These “lively stones” grate upon one another and forbearance is the result. Inanimate stones don’t need to “learn” to get along with each other, but these living stones force one another to “love one another”. So often men think that harmony is demonstrated when everybody crosses their tees and dots their eyes the same. Yet the LORD has placed great diversity among HIS flock for the purpose of forcing them to learn to love and forbear with one another. We often pray for patience only to discover that the way the LORD is pleased to give us patience is by giving us trials that force us to be patient. So too does HE teach us to love one another by the same method.

These “lively stones” need one another. Paul exhorted the Hebrews; *“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”* (Heb 10:24-25) There are many today who profess to be the followers of CHRIST who pay no heed to this exhortation. *“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”* (1John 3:14) It is difficult (perhaps impossible) to demonstrate a love for the brethren if we do not even have regard enough to them, and that which we may provide for them, to assemble together with them on a regular basis.