

spiritual milk in order to grow. The spiritual nourishment is the living Word of God that is both the Bible and the Holy Spirit living within us. We are to dine deeply at Christ's table.

What am I?

II. We Are Living Stones

Peter again reached back into his heritage and used an image from Isaiah. This image is about a "living stone." Isaiah spoke of a stone that was rejected as being useless but became the cornerstone. We can easily see why people heard that analogy and immediately thought of Jesus. He was condemned by the Jewish leaders as being worthless and was crucified. But like a stone at first deemed useless that later became the cornerstone of the building, Christ is the living cornerstone.

Peter tells us that people who follow Jesus are likewise living stones. But these stones are being used to build up a spiritual house.

What am I?

III. We Are a Chosen People

Throughout this section, Peter used a series of visual images to identify people and give them a new identity in Christ. In verses 9-10, he tells us that Christians are a chosen people.

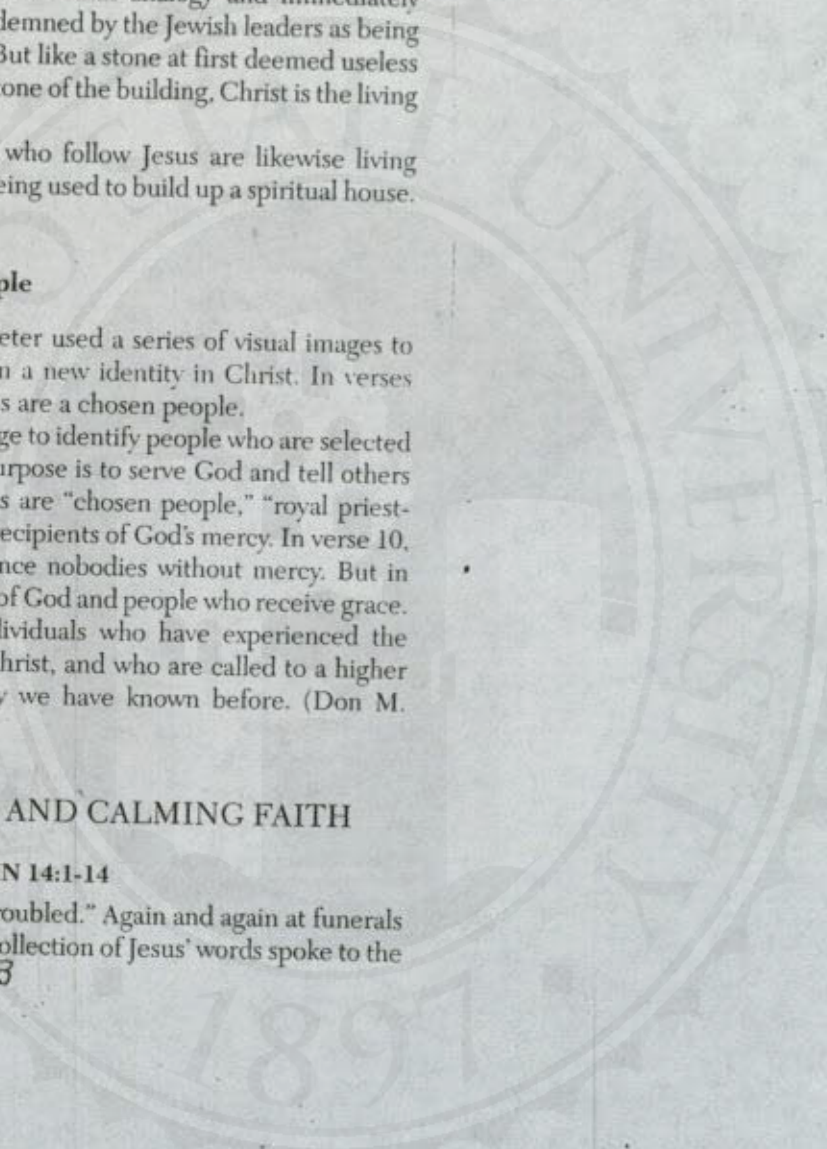
That is good biblical language to identify people who are selected by God for a purpose. That purpose is to serve God and tell others about God's ways. Other ideas are "chosen people," "royal priesthood," "holy nation," and the recipients of God's mercy. In verse 10, Peter tells us that we were once nobodies without mercy. But in Christ, we are now the people of God and people who receive grace.

What are we? We are individuals who have experienced the transforming touch of Jesus Christ, and who are called to a higher and deeper purpose than any we have known before. (Don M. Aycock)

TROUBLED LIVES AND CALMING FAITH

JOHN 14:1-14

"Do not let your hearts be troubled." Again and again at funerals we read this passage. John's recollection of Jesus' words spoke to the



disciples and speaks to us, also. The experiences of that last week troubled the disciples of Jesus. Jesus' ministry was moving to a meaningful climax. The people were willing to proclaim Jesus to be their Messiah. They should have been days of triumph, but Jesus was speaking of death. He was talking about his own death rather than his triumph. He portrayed the end of his ministry rather than its beginning.

Jesus knew the troubled hearts of his disciples. He had experienced the same emotions. Jesus stood with the sisters at the tomb of his friend Lazarus and shuddered (John 11:33). Facing the death of a friend was a troubling experience for Jesus. Jesus experienced the same troubling when he considered his betrayal by Judas (John 13:21).

I. Troubled Hearts Are Common to All

We also have troubled hearts today. We see our children waste their talents as they wander from the way of living we taught them. Our hopes and dreams are shattered as we see them wasted like the prodigal. Our hearts may be troubled by difficulty at work. Our hearts may be troubled by our lack of faith or our failure to develop our faith in God. Death of a friend or family member or self may cause our hearts to be deeply troubled. Whatever the reason for our troubled hearts, it is so similar to that experience of the disciples—even of Jesus himself.

II. Faith Can Overcome Any Fear

"Do not let your hearts be troubled." That is no glib or easy answer. It is an answer of faith. John MacMurray described most of us when he described many persons riddled by fear because they think they are alone in a hostile world. Like the disciples of long ago, we do have plenty around us that can trouble us—and does trouble us.

False religion promises that the worst will not happen. Many seek God to escape troubling times. We think that if we can only be with him, obey him, love him, ask him, then God will make sure we do not have to endure the worst. Such a promise is impossible. We cannot escape the troubles of life.

A teenage son of friends was killed in an accident. The father and the mother have given their lives and their talent to serve God. If