



1 Peter 2:4-8
Built on The Living Stone

4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,
 5 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.
 6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."
 7 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,"
 8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon in writing about the development of his preaching style said it was initially his habit to leave all of his applications for the end of the Sermon, but that he noticed that by the end of the sermon the people who most needed to take those applications to heart were either too tired or too distracted to make much use of them. And so he changed his practice and begin making applications at the beginning of his sermon before even the weakest Christian or unbeliever could be expected to have fallen asleep. It occurred to me as I read that, that following the Puritans, it has always been my practice to load my applications at the end of my sermons as well and that I had observed exactly what Spurgeon had, namely by the time I get to them, those who probably most need them are well into the eyes half-closed, head bob stage or are have already day dreamed themselves several days into the future.

So, I said to myself, myself – its time to start following Spurgeon’s example. Here then is an application of what Peter is saying here right up front.

1) There are some stones in the pathway of your life that can be ignored or simply avoided. The way for instance if you are mountain biking you can go over small stones, and around larger ones. But there is one stone, that every man, every woman, every child, cannot avoid and cannot ignore. You simply do not have that option. That stone, that living stone, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Once again you have found that stone in your pathway. And once again you only have two options, you can accept Him, and He will become the foundation stone, the chief corner stone of your life, or you can reject him. If you accept him, you will never be disappointed by Him or put to shame, never in all eternity.

But if you do choose to reject him, he will not be to you a *corner* stone, but a *stumbling* stone, a stone you trip over and fall upon and to quote the warning of Jesus regarding rejecting Him in Luke 20:18: ***“Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”***

So as we go deeper into what these verses mean, I want you to keep this fact foremost in your mind: By God's appointment, and by the clear, unavoidable testimony of His Word, Jesus Christ can be to you only one of two kinds of stones - a foundation stone or a stumbling stone. This day, before you even consider nodding off or daydreaming, you need to decide for certain which Stone He is to you.

Now in speaking to those who know Jesus as the foundation stone of their entire existence, that is the people he addressed in 1:23 as those have been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word of God, real Christians, Peter points out the huge difference between their opinion of Jesus and that of the World.

You see Christians agree with the Father that Jesus is the Lord's Living Stone, His Chosen instrument, and very precious.

Why A Living Stone? When men die they become like a slab of granite, cold, lifeless, inert. Name any revered religious leader of the past, be it Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, Joe Smith, L. Ron Hubbard or whoever – all of them have this in common with stones – they are as dead and lifeless as rocks.

But not Christ. Yes Christ died on the Cross, but Peter testified that He did not that stay that way:
3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.

No Christ's only resemblance stones is not in his lifelessness, but in his stability, his unshakeableness, his alone suitability as a foundation to build your lives on.

Why Chosen? Well the appearance in the world of Jesus Christ the Living Stone was not accident, far from it. In eternity past, before even the Creation of the World, in that Great Counsel that only Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were parties the decision made that after mankind sinned against God's Law and became guilty before Him, that Jesus would come into the World to redeem a chosen people to Himself from the curse of that Law, that is what Paul speaks of in

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth -- in Him.

The Lord told His people about the Living Stone in Isaiah 28:16, roughly 700 years before Christ was born in Bethlehem: "16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ***"Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a***

foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily.” Now God knew even before then, that that stone he was about to lay would be rejected by the majority of the people of Israel, and certainly by its leaders, that is why we also read in Psalm 118:22 ***“The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.”***

Why Precious to God? Well there I need say no more than what the Father himself said of Christ more than once: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

Precious to God but rejected by men.

A builder examines the materials that are given to him to build with. Is this wood what is needed for the project? Will this stone fit the needs of the project? The Builders in Israel examined Christ and rejected Him.

When the Lord presented His foundation stone Jesus saying this is what you need, the Scribes, the Pharisees, the High Priests were all but unanimous in their rejection of Jesus. ***“This stone doesn't fit with our plan, its all wrong. This is no glorious king, HE will not grant us power over our enemies, he doesn't confirm our high opinions of ourselves, he does not promise us worldly wealth, he doesn't even give us assurances that if we follow him, we will not suffer for it. Therefore we cast this stone out of the city, he is fit only for the rubbish heap.***

Of course it is not the stone that is unsuitable, it is the plans of those builders. They did not want to build a spiritual house, a temple in which God could forever dwell with his people. They were building a carnal kingdom, a place where fallen desires are catered to. They were in the process of building their own version of Bunyan's Vanity Fair, and Christ could never make a suitable foundation stone for that city. Today that is still why men reject Him, the plans they make for their lives, are not God's plans, their desires, are not God's desires: ***“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh”***

But to those who Christian Pilgrims whose desire is to be part of that Heavenly City, who believe in the Promises of God, Jesus is the ideal foundation. They have seen the vanity of what the world builds on shifting sand, and they know it is the Devil's Counterfeit. They know when the Storm comes that House will never stand.

Now the foundation stone, cornerstone, is incredibly important because it sets the angle and level of all the walls. It had to be perfect, or all the stones placed upon it would be off as well, and as the construction progressed and the wall grew, even a minor flaw would become worse and worse, until the entire building became unstable. Now what God is doing with you Christians is he is taking you and shaping you after the image of Christ, he is making you living stones as well, and then stone by stone He is building a temple fit for Him to dwell in. He is building Christ's Church with you. Not just the Church now here on earth, but the Church that will exist for all eternity:

***Eph. 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,***

***21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,
22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.***

Now you will be able to see the effects of that process in your life. As you are shaped and prepared for your own place in the wall, you are being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, you will become more holy. Sometimes though, that will mean pain, as God removes things from your life that don't fit the pattern. It also means that your life will increasingly be one long sacrifice of praise to Jesus Christ.

And Why? Because to you who believe the Gospel, Jesus is very precious, nothing to you has greater value. He is that which you treasure most and that which you could never go without. A woman who feels that way, would gladly wash his feet with her tears and dry them with her hair. A man would rejoice to be found worthy to suffer his name.

Jesus is so precious to the believer that if the Devil were to appear and promised you authority over all the kingdoms of the world and all their glory, if you would forsake Christ forever and worship him, you would not hesitate for a moment but would say "***Get behind me Satan!***" Therefore for you who believe: ***to live is Christ, and to die is gain.***

Now I can make a host of minor applications, For instance: I could direct you to notice that God says what he is doing with believers is forming them together to build *his church*. He doesn't set down the living stones by themselves, we are only really where we are supposed to be when we are together in the body of Christ. There really are no lone ranger Christians. We as Americans are prone to think that the Church was created by God to serve the needs of the individual, or even the needs of the Family, but what the Bible tells you is that both Christian individuals and Christian families are actually all intended to be part of His *Ekklesia*.

That is an important consideration, but I want to return to that original point, and ask you if you have decided what kind of stone Jesus is to you? Is He your Cornerstone? Do you believe the Good News, is Jesus Christ unspeakably precious to you?

Or is he a rock of offense? Are you content to remain disobedient to His Word? Have you stamped Him Rejected as UNSUITABLE for your plans? Will you finally prove yourself to be amongst those who were appointed not for glory but for eternal judgment?

If you have I beg you to reconsider. Those of you who still do not quite believe. Consider, I preach to you today as a dying man addressing dying men. If you will not listen to the testimony of scripture, then at the very least consider the evidence of the world and see the long term results of building on sand. Don't kid yourself if you will not come to Christ, the only impediment is the hardness of your heart, you are your own stumbling block. I know that from my own experience, I was once just as you, perhaps worse, but oh the difference the love of Christ makes on a life is indescribable. I wish I could tell you of it, but I cannot. Unless you taste and see for yourself, you will never know...