

# The Cornerstone of God's Choosing

Psalm 118:1-29

8 May 2022

Halifax, 10:30 AM

## Introduction:

Last week, we began a new sermon series in Hebrews.

- We did an overview of the entire book in which we saw that Hebrews is an exhortation to believers to stay true to Christ.
  - The Holy Spirit shows us that He fully recognises the pressure we are under—pressure to draw back from our fidelity to Christ.
- If we follow Jesus fully, it means that we will follow Him in the areas where He is most opposed in our particular times. When we do, we will face rejection, ridicule, shaming, loss of status in the community, job loss, fines, imprisonment, and even execution.
  - I have chosen to preach from this book of Hebrews at this time because we have seen such a rapid increase in hostility to those who follow Jesus today.
  - It was only a generation or two ago that people would, at least outwardly, identify as Christians in order to have respect in the public square.
    - Now it is the opposite—people who want respect in the world will avoid identifying with Christ.
    - Of course, even when it was the other way around, those who *truly* followed Christ and who *fully* followed Him were still ridiculed—but the opposition has become much more open and hostile than it used to be.
- The epistle to the Hebrews addresses believers under such opposition.
  - It was written to exhort Jewish Christians to remain true to Christ despite the rejection they received from their Jewish society.
    - It shows how Christ is superior to the shadows of the Old Covenant.
    - But it is written in such a way that it addresses Christians in every age who are opposed and ostracised for following Christ.
      - It sets before us the excellence of Christ Jesus our Lord so that we will be able to see that fully following Him without shame is the only way to go!

Today, I am going to continue our sermon series in Hebrews, but we won't be looking directly at Hebrews.

- For those of you who have been at Covenant Reformed for a long time, you will not be surprised by this.
  - It has been my custom here for the last twenty years or so to present to you a theme song (of sorts) to go with whatever I am currently preaching on.
  - In our most recent series, the Song of Solomon, I did things a little differently in that we only had one song for the entire time.
    - Usually, it has been my practice to present a new song every few weeks rather than to have the same song for a whole year—and with Hebrews, I am going back to that practice.

- The song that I am introducing today will be our theme song for the first two chapters of Hebrews. After that, we will take up a new one.
  - As we saw last week, these first two chapters present Jesus as God’s Son who was sent from heaven to bring us to glory.
    - Do you remember how I pointed out to you that we all desire glory if only we could have it?
      - Well, God tells us in Hebrews 1 & 2 that He has revealed Jesus as the only way to glory.
      - We are exhorted to receive Him as the one God has revealed.

The song I have chosen to go along with these first two chapters—the song I am introducing to you today—is Psalm 118.

- This is the Psalm about Jesus being the cornerstone that was rejected by the builders, but chosen by God to be the chief cornerstone of God’s household.
- Listen now as I read it to you. Psalm 118.
- Please give attention because this is the word of God.

**Psalm 118:1-29:** Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good!* For His mercy *endures* forever. <sup>2</sup> Let Israel now say, “His mercy *endures* forever.” <sup>3</sup> Let the house of Aaron now say, “His mercy *endures* forever.” <sup>4</sup> Let those who fear the LORD now say, “His mercy *endures* forever.” <sup>5</sup> I called on the LORD in distress; the LORD answered me *and set me* in a broad place. <sup>6</sup> The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? <sup>7</sup> The LORD is for me among those who help me; therefore I shall see *my desire* on those who hate me. <sup>8</sup> *It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. <sup>9</sup> *It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes. <sup>10</sup> All nations surrounded me, but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. <sup>11</sup> They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me; but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. <sup>12</sup> They surrounded me like bees; they were quenched like a fire of thorns; for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. <sup>13</sup> You pushed me violently, that I might fall, but the LORD helped me. <sup>14</sup> The LORD *is* my strength and song, and He has become my salvation. <sup>15</sup> The voice of rejoicing and salvation *is* in the tents of the righteous;

the right hand of the LORD does valiantly. <sup>16</sup> The right hand of the LORD is exalted; the right hand of the LORD does valiantly. <sup>17</sup> I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. <sup>18</sup> The LORD has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death. <sup>19</sup> Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, *and* I will praise the LORD. <sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD, through which the righteous shall enter. <sup>21</sup> I will praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my salvation. <sup>22</sup> The stone *which* the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. <sup>23</sup> This was the LORD’s doing; *it is* marvelous in our eyes. <sup>24</sup> This *is* the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. <sup>25</sup> Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. <sup>26</sup> Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. <sup>27</sup> God *is* the LORD, And He has given us light; bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. <sup>28</sup> You *are* my God, and I will praise You; *You are* my God, I will exalt You. <sup>29</sup> Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good!* For His mercy *endures* forever.

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His holy Word.

I would draw your attention to verse 22: **“The stone *which* the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.”**

- I want to begin by unpacking this verse.
  - As we will see, the whole Psalm revolves around it.
  - In fact, the whole world revolves around what we are told in this verse.
  - Jesus Himself refers to it in the New Testament and so does the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul.
- So I will begin by unpacking verse 22.
  - After we have done that, we will look at what follows it and then at what precedes it.

## **I. Psalm 118:22 unpacked.**

A. The first thing to understand is that Jesus is the rejected stone.

1. Peter tells us that with no uncertainty in Acts 4:10-11.
  - Here, after being arrested for preaching about Jesus, Peter explains how it is that the man he had healed was healed, saying: <sup>10</sup> **“Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. <sup>11</sup> This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ ”**
  - We know, of course, that Jesus was officially rejected by the leaders of the Jews, the General Assembly or Sanhedrin as they were called, led by the high priest.
    - They delivered Jesus our Lord up to be crucified. He was the rejected stone.
2. But this rejection of Jesus is also true in a more general way in every age.
  - a. Jesus is regarded by many in the world as evil, foolish, weak, or a killjoy.
    - Even though He has been presented as the Saviour of the world, most who hear of Him reject Him for one or more of these reasons.
      - At least, they desperately want Him to be like this because the truth is, they are looking for a reason not to believe.
      - They don’t want to admit, even to themselves, that they would be capable of rejecting the one that God sent to save them from their sin.
    - Often, of course, they are haunted by the reality that He is actually the very opposite of what they accuse Him of—that He is actually holy, wise, mighty, and the source of happiness to all who receive Him.
      - But still, sin has such a hold on them that they make excuses and continue to reject Him as evil, foolish, weak, and a killjoy.
  - b. Those who do receive Christ are likewise considered to be evil, foolish, weak, and killjoys—
    - Like Jesus their Master, they are seen to be a menace and a threat to society, but those who reject them are also haunted by their love, wisdom, resilience, and joy.

- They must bear the reproach of Jesus, the rejected stone. They share with Him in being opposed by the world.
  - Hebrews addresses us as those who are opposed for following Jesus.
- Now let's consider the building. There is some sort of building here because it speaks of Jesus as a cornerstone rejected by the builders. So what is the building?
- B. The building is the human race being built up to be a holy temple of the Lord—reaching the goal that the Lord has for mankind.
1. As I pointed out last week, God created us to attain glory.
    - It is part of who we are as human beings.
    - We may become despondent in this sinful world and be crushed in our spirit, but if we knew we could truly have glory—that we really could attain true happiness and glory—we would definitely want that.
    - We all know that we are not what we ought to be as people.
  2. The scriptures teach us that God created us in His own image.
    - That means that in some way, we were created to look like Him.
    - We know that it is not a physical likeness because the Bible teaches us that God does not even have body like we do—He is a pure spirit.
    - The scriptures teach that we are His image in our moral nature—we were created to be like Him in wisdom, justice, truth, holiness, goodness, love—
      - Not that we would have these to the same extent as He does, but that we would have them as purely as He does on a human level.
      - A thread of pure gold is as pure as a giant bar of gold. There is just more—much more—in the bar than in the thread.
  3. The scriptures also teach that God created us to know Him and to worship Him as our God—we were made to live in perfect harmony with Him, always doing His will and behaving in ways that please and delight Him.
    - When we were first created, we were able to do that.
  4. The Lord gave us a place to live—this world—a beautiful place filled with all sorts of treasures for us to discover and enjoy sharing with each other.
    - This includes our talents and abilities in both arts and sciences, technology and exploration.
    - We have within us ability to make each other happy and prosperous.
  5. He gave us dominion over the earth, and He gave us a job to do.
    - He called us to subdue the earth to fill it with offspring—people who were beautiful image bearers who would bring glory to Him through their lives together.
    - This is the goal that He still has for us—to fill the whole earth with His glory.
      - In Ephesians, Paul refers to us a building for God, a holy temple for Him made of living stones.
      - Peter said the same thing in the passage we read earlier:

- 1 Peter 2:5 says: **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.**

➤ So that is the building. But who are the builders?

C. We, the human race, are the builders. Yes, we are both the building and the builders.

1. We are to build according to God's directives and also by His enablement.
  - He promised to sustain us, to guide us, and to give us wisdom and strength and joy that we might achieve His goal—being built up as a beautiful living temple for Him. We were headed for glory.
2. But we made a fatal decision right from the beginning.
  - We took Satan's advice to build according to our own plans instead of God's.
    - God warned us that if we took this course of action, we would surely die.
    - And indeed, He sentenced us to toil and sorrow and death, turning us over to our own way to become the empty, miserable creatures we are when we try to live without Him.
    - Our world is full of war, greed, abuse, immorality, blasphemy, idolatry, hatred, deception, anger, bitterness, despair—the fruit of our own way.
  - God has justly consigned us to go with Satan to the Lake of Fire because of what we did in rejecting Him. We get what we asked for—life without God.

➤ But God also did something else. Something wonderful.

D. The Lord God has revealed to us right after we fell that He was still going to complete the building project—He will gather and build a people chosen out of the world and bring them to perfection in glory!

1. Right after we rebelled, He promised that He would bring forth a people who would oppose Satan and his counsel that we should strive for glory without God.
  - In short, the Lord told us in Genesis 3 that the people He would bring forth to build His true house would clash with those who would want to continue building society without God—striving for glory without His help.
2. He promised that in time, a Son would be born of a woman, a Son who would succeed in returning the world to God—
  - He would do this by taking a people out from the others and reconciling these people to Himself—restoring them to God until they filled the world.
  - These people are called the elect of God, God's kingdom, the righteous, the saints, the city of God, the temple of God made of living stones, the house of God, God's people, God's bride, the body of Christ, a holy nation—
  - All through history, these people have stood out from the builders of the world in this way:
    - The builders of the world pursue glory in their own way—apart from God.
    - The ones God has chosen for glory look in faith to God to establish them as stones within His glorious house by the Son that He has promised.
    - The ones of the world reject Jesus (the cornerstone) and the elect receive Him.

3. What we see in Psalm 118:22 is the world's rejection of Christ—led by the Jewish priests and elders of the church.
  - Though they did it in malice, it was God's plan for Jesus to be rejected that He might bear the sin of those He came to save on the cross.
    - He was punished for our sins with the pains of hell—He was the rejected stone.
  - But we also see God's acceptance of Him: the stone that was rejected is made the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing.
    - God raised Him up to be Lord and Saviour.
    - He is the only one to attain acceptance in God's glory house—the only man to attain the glory that God called us to attain.
      - But since He came to represent all the people that God appointed to salvation, His acceptance includes all of them too—
        - Every one of them comes to God through faith in Him.

TRANS> As I mentioned before, Psalm 118 is built around verse 22—this verse speaks of such a momentous thing!

- The whole Psalm is a response to God for raising up Christ the rejected stone to be the saviour of His people and so of the whole world.
  - In this Psalm we have Jesus leading the whole church to praise God for accepting Him, the stone that was rejected, for the salvation of them all.

I'm going to wait until next week to continue with this.

- I think we have had a full amount to think about today.
  - We'll pick up here and look at what after and before next week.
  - I want to have time to develop that fully.