

Living Stone Privileges

I Peter 2:4-10

“To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 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. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

Peter has been dealing with our responsibility as Christians. Beginning in chapter 1, verse 13 Peter delivers to us this call to be holy, and then he transitions to some of our responsibilities to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Now in I Peter

chapter 2, verses 4-10, Peter teaches on Christ our cornerstone and several of the privileges we have in Christ are brought to our attention.

In verse 5 we see that we are built up in Christ. In verse 7 we see that to us, Christ is precious. In verse 9 we are told that we are a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.” In verse 10 we see that we are the people of God and have obtained mercy. All of these privileges flow out of our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. From this passage, God wants to remind us of the privileges we have in Christ.

Peter grounds this passage by teaching that Christ is our corner stone. What is a corner stone? Different scholars have different ideas about what exactly Peter is referring to here. Some think he was referring to a cornerstone like we are familiar with in buildings today. Some think he was referring to the key stone in an arch. Still others think the reference here is to the capstone of a pyramid. Each of these comparisons would apply to the work and ministry of Jesus Christ.

It could be that Peter was referring to a cornerstone much like we still see in buildings today. If you go downtown and look at the older buildings, many of them have a large stone at one of the corners that has some information about the building inscribed on it. This church building has a stone like that. If you go out the front door here and look to your right, at the corner of this building, there is a cornerstone. It has the church name and date and a scripture verse inscribed on it.

Today many of these cornerstones are purely symbolic. They represent the foundation of the building. A cornerstone marks the spot where two walls join together. What a beautiful picture this is of Christ. Christ is the only true foundation. If you are resting on anything else, it will fail you. If you are resting on anyone else, they will fail you. If you are trusting anything other than Jesus Christ as the cornerstone, the foundation, of your faith, than this passage isn't for you. The privileges Peter goes on to discuss in this passage only apply to those who have Jesus Christ as their cornerstone. Christ is the only true foundation.

Christ also joins two distinct groups into one, like a cornerstone joins two walls. Before Christ, there were Jews and Gentiles. But in Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Gentile . . . for ye are all one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28). In Ephesians 2:13, Paul, speaking to Gentile Christians, says this, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." He continues in verses 21 and 22, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Jesus Christ is the perfect cornerstone.

It could be that Peter was referring to the keystone of an arch. A true arch is held together by the force of gravity. To make an arch, you would build a frame and then stack the stones for that arch on that frame. The final stone you would put in would be the stone in the very middle. Then you would remove the frame. With

the frame removed, the stones you stacked would want to fall in toward the middle, but the keystone holds them in place. It provides all the stability and strength of the arch. Without the keystone, the arch would fall apart.

What a wonderful picture this is of Christ. Christ is the head of the church. Ephesians 5:23b says, “Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.” Colossians 1:18 says, “And he (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” If you take Christ out of the church, there is no strength or stability. If Christ is not central, if Christ is not the keystone, then the church falls apart.

It could be that Peter was referring to the capstone of a pyramid. Think about the pyramids in Egypt for a moment. What shape is a pyramid? It is pyramid shaped. That’s the whole idea. Now, how many stones in a pyramid are shaped like a pyramid? Only one. Stones are cut in various shapes and perfectly fit together, but only one is shaped like a pyramid. That is the capstone. The capstone occupies the highest place on the pyramid. The capstone’s shape determines the shape of the entire pyramid. The capstone is the last stone to be placed.

Again, what a beautiful picture this is of Christ. Christ occupies the highest position in the Church. Christ’s character determines the character of the church. And when Christ returns, the church will be complete.

Peter goes on to describe Christ our cornerstone. Christ our cornerstone is a living stone. I Peter 2:4, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.” Living stone sounds like an oxymoron. One of those combinations of words that contradict each other, like “original copy,” “exact estimate,” or “act naturally.” How can a stone be living? Yet this is how Christ is described, and what a fitting description it is when considered.

Christ has eternal life within himself. He is the author of life. He is the sustainer of life. He is the giver of life to his people. Listen to what Jesus says of Himself in Revelation 1:18, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” Christ our cornerstone is a living stone.

This passage also tells us that Christ our corner stone was rejected. Verse 4 tells us that Jesus was “disallowed indeed of men” and that thought is continued in verse 7, “the stone which the builders disallowed.” This is a quote from Psalm 118:22. That word “disallowed” is a serious word. Webster, in his 1828 dictionary, gave this definition for disallowed: “Not granted, permitted, or admitted; disapproved, rejected.”

What a serious charge to be laid at the feet of men, to have disallowed Christ. To have not granted Him His rightful authority. To have not permitted Him

to rule and overrule. To have not admitted Him as Lord of all. To have disapproved the Lord of all Creation. To have rejected the grace of God.

This rejected stone becomes a “stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” (v. 8). This is a fulfillment of Isaiah 8:14-15, “And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.” This prophecy was literally fulfilled when Jesus came and the Jews rejected Him. Like the parable Jesus taught in Luke 20. The Father sent His son to accomplish His will. The stewards had killed his other messengers, but surely they would listen to the Father’s only, beloved Son. But instead, they rejected Christ and He became a “stone of stumbling and a rock of offense unto them.”

But this word is not just for the Jews of Jesus’ day. This is fulfilled when any person rejects Christ. The following is a quote from the *Believer’s Bible Commentary*: “Men either bow before [Christ] in repentance or stumble over Him into hell. . . . There can be no neutrality; He must be either Savior or Judge.” For multitudes of men, Christ the cornerstone is rejected.

What is Christ to you? If you are here today and you are not a Christian, I plead with you to listen to the warning God gives here. If you reject Christ, He will become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to you. You can’t straddle the fence with Jesus. He will either be your Savior or your Judge.

Christ our corner stone is chosen. Multitudes of men reject Christ, but man's opinion isn't the opinion that matters. Look back up at verse 4: Christ our cornerstone is "chosen of God." Man cast Jesus aside, but God exalted Him. Philippians 2:9-11, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Verse 6 continues this thought. There Christ is called "elect," chosen. This is a quote from Isaiah 23:18. Christ was chosen by God to fill the place of greatest honor. Christ our corner stone is chosen by God.

Christ our corner stone is precious. In verse 4 we are told that Jesus Christ is precious to God. This is repeated in verse 6. Again, this is drawn from Isaiah 23:18. There can be no measure placed on the value of Jesus Christ to God the Father. It's beyond our ability to understand. Christ is infinitely precious to God the Father.

Christ is our cornerstone. He is described for us in this passage. He is living. He has been rejected by men. He is chosen and precious to God. This passage goes on to describe our privileges in Christ.

In I Peter 2:5 we see that we are built up in Christ. I Peter 2:5, "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.” This verse describes Christians as “lively stones.” The life we have is not our own. We were dead in trespasses and sins. We have been buried with Christ in baptism. We have been raised to walk in newness of life. Romans 6:11 says, “Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” In Christ, we are living stones and we are built up. But built up into what?

A spiritual house. You, Christian, are the temple of God. God dwells within you. You are a living stone in the church. Not a building, but a body. Not one individual, but many joined together by the Spirit of God. Not only are we built up as the temple of God, but we are also built up as a holy priesthood.

We are a holy priesthood. Not only are we the church, but we also are to serve in the church. Remember, you are a living stone. You are not like the bricks that make up this church building we meet in. Those bricks are dead. They have no life in them. They will not move. They will not serve. But you, Christian, you are not dead. You are living. Not just your natural life, but as a Christian, you have spiritual life. Use that life in service to God and others. The first privilege we have in Christ is that we are built up as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood.

Next, we see that, to us, Christ is precious. I Peter 2:7a, “Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.” To the world, Christ is not precious. Why would He be precious to them? Some respect Jesus as a great teacher. Some regard Him as an

interesting figure in history. Some dismiss Him as fiction. Some hate Him with burning passion. He is precious to none of them.

But to you, Christian, Christ is precious. What is life without Christ? Better to live one moment with Christ than 1000 lifetimes without Him. Compared to Christ, what matters? What would we be, who would we be, where would we be without Him? I'm going to read a portion of a poem written by Watchman Nee, who was a leader in the church in China and suffered terribly at the hands of the Communists, eventually dying in prison. Listen to what he wrote about Jesus:

Dear Lord Jesus, precious Jesus,
Gladly will I hear Thy call;
Since Thy voice my heart hath entered,
I from all things could but sever;
Void are all my other seekings,
Every pride hath disappeared.

Dear Lord Jesus, precious Jesus,
Can I tell it all to Thee?
Thou my love and satisfaction,
Thou my everlasting portion;
Thou art all that I desire,

Nothing else I would pursue.

Dear Lord Jesus, precious Jesus,

All I have I give to Thee;

Who like Thee—so fair and comely?

Who like Thee—so sweet and lovely?

Matchless One, unrivaled beauty,

None can e'er compete with Thee!

Here is a man who gave everything for Christ. He suffered terrible persecution and eventually died in prison because of Jesus Christ. Is he angry? Is he bitter? No, because Christ was precious to him. Christ was infinitely more valuable than anything this world has to offer.

We are looking at our privileges in Christ. We are built up in Christ. To us, Christ is precious. Next, I Peter 2:9 tells us that we are a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.”

God had promised Israel these very privileges if they would obey Him. In Exodus 19:5-6a God told the Israelites: “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” Israel forfeited these privileges through her disobedience.

In the present age, the church occupies this position. Paul warns us Gentiles to accept this position in God's favor with great humility in Romans 11:20b-21, "Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."

I want to be clear, I am not teaching that Israel has been replaced in God's plan. Israel still has a place in God's plan. There were specific promises made to Israel that are for Israel, and not for the church. But here is an example of privileges that we, as the church, have that once belonged to only the Jews.

We are a "chosen generation." The word translated here as "chosen" is the same word used in I Peter 1:2 where it is translated as "elect." This isn't a position you have earned. This is a privilege you have in Christ.

We are a "royal priesthood." This is the second time in this passage that Christians have been called priests. In verse 5 Christians are said to be built up into a "holy priesthood." Here it is said that we are a "royal priesthood." In verse 5 the emphasis is on praise. In verse 9 the emphasis is on proclamation. As priests, we are to praise God and proclaim Him to others.

We are a "holy nation." This is not a holiness we have earned or achieved. This is a holiness given to us through Jesus Christ. This is a privilege we have in Christ.

We are a “peculiar people.” I’ve been called peculiar, and the people who said it were not trying to compliment me; But here, being called peculiar is a good thing. We are a people set apart for God. What a privilege. What an honor.

We are looking at our privileges in Christ from this passage. So far we have seen that we are built up in Christ; that, to us, Christ is precious; and that we are a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.” Finally, in verse 10 we see that we are the people of God and have obtained mercy. I Peter 2:10, “Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

This verse parallels Hosea 2:23. There the Lord says, “I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.” We have been brought into the kingdom of God, as the people of God. Not based on anything we have done, but based on our position in Christ.

We have obtained mercy. Not because we deserved it. Not because we are pretty good people and we had mercy coming our way. No! Only because of Christ. The mercy we have received is based on our position in Christ.

This passage lays out Christ as our cornerstone. He is a living stone, the source of life. He was rejected by men, but is chosen and precious in the eyes of God the Father.

In Christ, we have many privileges. We looked at four that are mentioned in this passage: we are built up in Christ; to us, Christ is precious; we are a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,” we are the people of God and have obtained mercy.

If you are here this morning and you are not a Christian, than the privileges spoken of in this passage are not yours. These privileges are given a qualification in the first three words of verse 4, “To whom coming.” For these privileges to be yours, you must come to Christ. If God has been working on your heart, if you have experienced conviction over your sin, if you have heard the Gospel preached 1000 times, but have never responded to it, don’t assume upon the grace of God any longer. This passage shows just a little portion of the great riches that are ours in Christ. But verse 8 contains a warning. If you reject Christ, He will become a rock of offense and a stone of stumbling to you. Don’t rest until you have settled this matter of your salvation.