

A Chief Cornerstone

1 Peter 2:6-10

I. Review

“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ² as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. 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” (1 Peter 2:1-5).

In short the passage before us can be understood thus: Since we have been born again and have tasted the graciousness of God, let us quit living sinfully (as if we haven't tasted the graciousness of God) and desire and pursue a proper, unadulterated understanding of God's word which, as a means of grace, will cause spiritual growth in our lives. Let us not approach church as some sort of lifeless building but as the living Savior who is the chief cornerstone. God has included us as living stones in this Holy Temple that we may offer up our own lives in a sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving and obedience to Him.

II. The Chief Cornerstone

“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” (1 Peter 2:6).

Peter Calls Upon Scripture

To buttress the idea already put forth, Peter calls upon the Scriptures. When the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation (although Peter is alluding only the old testament), are removed from the equation of human thinking there is no basis for truth, justice, logic, order, righteousness or anything else be it physical, metaphysical, material or immaterial. Apart from the absolute truths of scripture ones reality must be reduced to skepticism, absurdity, anarchy and contradiction. In short you believe the truth or you believe a lie.

The Authority of Scripture

I have to say that I do appreciate movements in Christendom which attempt to prove the authenticity of scripture but I believe a caution is in order. Whenever we use something outside of scripture to authenticate scripture we have lost the battle before it begins. For if scripture, as it teaches about itself, is the final and absolute authority

regarding all matters, the moment we lay it upon the examination table of fallible human criteria we have denied it's claims and lost the battle. For if I allow science, philosophy, history, literature, archeology, anthropology, or any other worldly discipline to be the barometer by which we measure the truth of scripture I have, at the get-go, acknowledged their worthiness and authority over the scriptures themselves. It is a logical fallacy to authenticate a greater authority by using a lesser authority. We, as believers in the truth, should not allow ourselves to deny what God has told us to be true.

Guarding A Lion

We must trust in the ultimate authority and power of the holy scriptures as a life-changing means of grace and salvation. The scriptures do not need the assistance of Aristotle or Einstein to exist. If I have a lion in my back yard I do not need rifle through the neighborhood to find pussycats to guard him. I simply need to allow him to be the lion that he is. The respect will come.

Physical Or Spiritual Temple?

Even though he had apostolic authority, Peter calls upon the scriptures to present Christ in the imagery of a chief cornerstone. As you know, the direction of the cornerstone determines the direction of the building. God has laid in Zion a chief cornerstone who is Christ the Lord. Since Christ, the chief cornerstone is laid or established in Zion, the location of the Jerusalem temple, I believe that it is erroneous and unbiblical for the church to set their sights, interests or hopes in any way upon the building of some physical temple in Israel or anywhere else. Let us not be as blind as the Pharisees. John records,

So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" 19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:18,19).

I think the emphasis in modern evangelicalism today on the temple being rebuilt in the middle east is a red herring which diverts our attention from Christ and what He said regarding the genuine temple and the genuine Israel of God. Jesus is called 'elect' and 'precious'. God has determined that Jesus would be the cornerstone of a much more glorious temple. A temple which would be comprised of Jesus and His bride, the church. This is the focus of Peter and should be ours as well.

Not Put to Shame -- Fig Leaves

So sure is the truth of Christ and the redemption that is found in Him and Him alone that Peter asserts that those who believe in Him will by no means be put to shame.

For although the arrogance of neo-sophisticates and the smugness of human sophistry may have its moment, ultimately it is the word of God that will endure to the end. And it is only those who will acquiesce to the word of God who will, in the final analysis, avoid the shame.

Man is sinful. From the time of Adam he has sought to hide his sins under fig leaves. It may be the fig leaves of rationale, psychology or any other diverting mechanism we might use to escape responsibility for our actions. But the fig leaves of human effort are about as effective as using a paper towel to shield you from a thunderstorm. There is only one covering for sin and the shame that comes with it. It is Christ the Lord.

III. The Rejected Stone

“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” (1 Peter 2:7).

Precious

The literal Greek translation of the first part of verse seven is, “For you therefore which believes is the preciousness.” What this likely means is, because Christ is precious to the Father, Christians, by virtue of their relationship and oneness with Christ are precious as well.

Still A Cornerstone

But to those who are disobedient He is a stumbling stone. Interestingly, whether He is believed or not does not effect whether or not he is the chief cornerstone. He is either a cornerstone on which the house of life and righteousness is built or He is the cornerstone that men trip over. This is reminiscent of the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians:

“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: ¹⁶To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life” (2 Corinthians 2:15,16).

Paul, as an apostle, delivering the message of the gospel is the savour of death to those who perish and the savor of life to those who are saved. But regardless of how he was perceived by men, to God he was the sweet savour of Christ. Regardless of the response of people, the message is sweet. The builders, in this case most likely referring to the Jewish leaders (even though it can apply to anyone who seeks to build a religious life, or any type of ideology, apart from Christ) have rejected the cornerstone. But having rejected the chief cornerstone, it wasn't as if Jesus is just out of the way. He becomes something to those who reject Him. He becomes...

IV. A Stone of Stumbling

“A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense.” They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed” (1 Peter 2:8).

The Watershed of Humanity

When people love their religion or their own system of thinking more than the free grace of Christ, He becomes a stumbling block. This type of thinking reveals human pride. Men wish to commandeer their own ships and build their own towers of Babel. Their deliverance was right before them but instead of embracing Him and building upon the rock, they tripped over it. Jesus Christ is the watershed of humanity. He will either be your Savior or your undoing. The lion in my backyard can only be ignored by those in my backyard for so long. He will either protect or devour you. When Jesus was an infant, Simeon conveyed a similar message to Mary:

“Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel...” (Luke 2:34).

The question you must ask yourself is Jesus your Savior or is He merely in your way. Matthew records the destiny of those who take rank against the cornerstone.

“And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder” (Matthew 21:44).

They Were Appointed

Peter finishes verse 8 with the words, “to which they also were appointed (some version use ‘destined’)” It might have been discouraging to many to see the very religious fail to embrace Jesus. They may have thought the Christian faith, and perhaps God Himself to be impotent to do anything about it. But it wasn’t as if this caught God by surprise. God’s sovereignty is once again displayed in that their offense, though a result of their own hard heart, was not outside the pale of God’s ordained will. Nothing is!

Appointed For a While

I would like to add something here. The fact that God appointed these people within His ordained will to disobedience does not necessarily mean that every one of those were appointed to remain in disobedience unto damnation (although some likely were). Peter seems hopeful that some who were presently in disobedience might not remain in disobedience. What we can learn from this is that God calls us to Himself according to His wise and holy timing.

Post Christian Era or Error?

People talk about the post-Christian era. Because we are living in a degenerative and apostate society, or even era in history and are surrounded by a wholesale rejection the word of God in virtually every institution that surrounds us (sadly including many churches) in no way makes the age in which we live a post Christian era. I've got a news flash for you...There is no post-Christian era! After Jesus resurrected He ascended to the right hand of the Father and was given all authority on heaven and earth. All power, rule, authority and dominion is presently His and He exercises that authority in and throughout history. And when the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing and take counsel against the Lord, it is a vain thing indeed.

Isaiah

Because men sin does not mean that Christ is not in control. When Isaiah saw the Lord lofty and exalted sitting upon His throne he said woe is me for I am undone. For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among people of unclean lips for my eyes have seen the Lord of hosts. He didn't say "woe is me, I am living in the post Christian era." It would have been more like, "Woe is me I am living in the era of Christian judgment." The wheels of God's justice may grind slowly but they grind to powder. But the good news is to those who receive the gospel. Peter continues:

V. God's People

"But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

The New Nation

Unlike those appointed to destruction you, Peter writes, are chosen for redemption. Everything the Pharisees thought they were, Christians genuinely are. This all by the choice and power of God. This passage should completely remove from any believer's thinking the idea that God continues to hold people has His own, in any manner, by virtue of their physical heritage or ancestry. In the old covenant the nation of Israel was everything of which Peter writes: Chosen, priests, a holy nation and special to God. That system was fading away at the time of this letter and it will never return. It's design was to foreshadow the genuine spiritual reality that would come when the Living cornerstone would be installed upon spiritual Zion, which Jesus called the church.

Chosen, Priests, Nation, Special

Although the church are still those chosen by the good pleasure of God the priests, as we mentioned last week are not an elite group of super-spiritual saints but a priesthood of believers who all, corporately and individually have confident access to God anytime and anywhere. This is true because the holy nation does not have borders or a flag but extends as far as the gospel and the proclamation of Christ's victory over death. And the

citizens of this holy nation are not special because of status or human fortitude. They are special because they are God's own people and the apple of His eye.

The Praises

The best and most significant information or proclamation these people bring to a lost and dying world are the praises of Him who has called them out of the darkness into His marvelous light. These people recognize they, apart from God they were

“...once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God” (1 Peter 2:10a)

They were those

“who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:10).

Will Jesus Christ be to you a rock of judgment or a rock of salvation? Will you be a recipient of God's justice or a recipient of God's mercy? He who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.