

CHRIST, THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE

1 Peter 2:4-8

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 28:9-22.

Intro: There are several OT passages that the Apostle Peter brought into the verses which we are considering today in 1 Peter 2:4-8. The first is in the Scripture reading we have had, and it is what Peter was referring to in 1 Pet. 2 6. Let me re-read to you what Mr. Mathison read in Isa. 28:16 a moment ago:

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

The second is in Psa. 118:22. I will read that verse to you, reading verses 23 and 24 also:

22 The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

23 This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

24 This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it (Psa. 118:22-24).

You will find verse 22 in this passage in the latter part of 1 Pet. 2:7.

The third is in Isa. 8:14, and it is in verse 8 of 1 Peter 2 where our Lord is called “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. Isa. 8:14 tells us this, reading verse 15 with it:

14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken (Isa. 8:14-15).

So the verses we have in 1 Peter today are deeply rooted in the OT. What was seen in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ while He was here on earth, was a fulfillment, at least in part, of those OT predictions. And the passages in Isaiah in particular were mentioned in connection with the judgments of God upon disobedient and rebellious Israel.

But now let us see what Peter had to say about them.

We have noticed from the beginning of this first epistle of Peter that Peter was addressing those “strangers” who had been “scattered” as believers. They were not strangers to him, but strangers in the world, strangers to the people of the world because they belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ, and

because, as the children of God they were living lives which were in the greatest contrast with the people of the world. And Peter was encouraging them to be even more separated from the world in their daily conduct.

In the last verse we considered last week, verse 3 of chapter 2, Peter spoke to them as those who had “tasted that the Lord is gracious.” That is, they were a people who had experienced the transforming power of the grace of God in their lives. And then, we Peter continued on in the verses we are looking at today, he spoke, first of all, about:

- 1) Christ in verse 4, then of his readers as
- 2) The people of God in verse 5. The he moved on to
- 3) The Scriptures in verse 6. Then to a very precious truth about
- 4) The people of God in the first statement of verse 7. And the rest of verse 7 and all of verse 8 are give to discussing
- 5) The people in the world who do not believe in the Lord. And so we will consider these verses in this order which I have mentioned.

First, then,

I. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (1 Pet. 2:4).

All through that area mentioned in chapter 1, verse 1 – “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” – were people who had come to Christ. They were among those who had “tasted that the Lord is gracious.” They were, according to Peter’s language in 1:17, the people who had called on the Lord for salvation, and who were continuing to call upon Him in worship as well as for His blessing and help day by day. And they had come to Him, not as a dead Christ, but as “a living stone.”

Wayne Grudem, in his commentary on 1 Peter, suggested that for Peter to speak of the Lord as “a living stone” would immediately show His superiority to the OT temple, as well as the temple where the Jews came to worship God in the days in which Peter was writing. And this was an expression which would show the power of the Lord and the unchanging character of the Lord. But since stones are not alive, this would show the unique character of the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps a stones relationship to the earth was a reference to the humanity of the Lord, but the “living” quality would be meant to picture His Deity. Just think about that expression, and you will see in what a glorious way the Apostle Peter was led by the Holy Spirit to portray our Savior.

But in spite of all of the glorious things that can be said about our Lord, He was “disallowed indeed of men.” Men disapproved of Him, and rejected of men. And, of course, behind those words is the fact that ultimately

they crucified Him. “Indeed” could be translated, *on the one hand*, and was used to prepare us for the different way, totally different, that the Father looked upon Him. Men despised everything about our Lord, but to God He was “chosen” to do the very work that He did, and He was “precious” to the Father. He was very dear to the Father. The Father spoke of Him as His *beloved* Son. He was the only begotten of the Father, which means that the Father had none other like the Lord Jesus. It is impossible for us to say how “precious” the Son was to the Father. This is where words fail us. And it only reveals the deep depravity of the human heart that He was and continues to be even today, “disallowed of men.”

But then Peter went on to speak about all of us who know the Lord.

II. THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN CHRIST (1 Pet. 1:5).

Amazingly the Apostle Peter used the same words to describe us that he used of the Lord, only in the plural: “Ye also, as living stones.” This shows that there is a real similarity between the Lord Jesus Christ and all of those who believe in Him. It is a similarity produced by the grace of God. In ourselves we could not be more different from the Lord, but by the work of redemption which God has done in our hearts, we bear the likeness of Christ, and we will bear that likeness more and more until we become like Him. Before we were weak; now in Him we are strong. And there is a stability of character and life that is apparent in the lives of all of the people of God which increases the longer we know Him. This is how God views us individually.

But together we are being “built up a spiritual house.” And since we are “living stones,” we grow as stones in the building, and the building also grows as new stones are continually being added to it.

The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians referred to this same figure of speech which the Apostle Peter used here. Listen to Paul’s words found in Eph. 2:19-22:

- 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
- 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;
- 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:
- 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

So this “spiritual house,” the body of Christ, is the place where God mani-

fest His presence in the most powerful way, on earth. These are truths of the most glorious nature. But this is not all.

Since in the house of God there was always a priesthood, we find that we are not only the house of God, but we are all members of “an holy priesthood.” And what do priests do? One of their primary functions is that they offer sacrifices. But the sacrifices we offer are “spiritual sacrifices.” We do not offer bulls and sheep to the Lord. That all came to an end when the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God offered Himself on the Cross to save us from our sins. But we do have “spiritual sacrifices” to offer to God, and they are only “acceptable to God” because we offer them through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me mention some of our sacrifices:

- 1) Our bodies (Rom. 12:1-20). This means our whole being is presented to the Lord.
- 2) Our praise (Heb. 13:15). And this is to be offered to the Lord continually.
- 3) Our good works (Heb. 13:16).
- 4) Our money (Heb. 13:16). Cf. also Phil. 4:18:

But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

A whole message could be devoted to our sacrifices which we offer to God as His “holy priesthood.” But let us be sure to notice that the only way that any sacrifice can be acceptable to God coming from us is as we offer them through “Jesus Christ.” It is only in Christ that anything that we do can possibly be acceptable, well pleasing, to God. And let us be sure that we are offering these sacrifices to the Lord.

One figure of speech to describe what we are to God, would not be sufficient, and so Peter here used three. We are living stones, a spiritual house, and a holy priesthood.

Now let us move on to verse 6 where the Apostle Peter cited a passage from the OT Scriptures.

III. THE SCRIPTURES (1 Pet. 2:6).

What Peter was speaking about here was not his own idea, nor was it an afterthought with God, but it had been predicted over 700 years before by the prophet Isaiah (as we have already seen in our Scripture reading). As the “living Stone,” our Lord is “the Chief Cornerstone” in this “spiritual

house” which is made up of all who are trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation.

Our Lord is the main stone in the building, “the Chief Cornerstone.” No other stone in the building compares with Him in importance. And this agrees with the words I gave you a few minutes ago from the Apostle Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus. In case you missed two very important words, let me read Eph. 2:22 to you again. Paul said regarding the building of the church, the body of Christ,

In whom (that is, in Christ) ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:22).

In the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Corinthians he carried the reference to Christ even a step farther when he said,

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-11).

So there would be no salvation, and there would be no church, if it were not for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The reference to Isa.28:16 was Peter’s way of saying that God is always faithful to His Word. The Word of God stands forever true. And for the encouragement of our faith, Peter added from Isaiah’s prophecy that those who trust in the Lord will not be “confounded.” We will not be ashamed because we have put our hope in something that will never be.

The OT version of Isa. 28:16 concludes with “shall not make haste.” The difference is because Peter was quoting from the Septuagint. But Fausset in the JFB commentary explains it this way:

[Shall not make haste] (yachish)-- shall not flee in hasty alarm; but the Septuagint have `shall not be ashamed; ' so <Rom. 9:33> and <1 Pet. 2:6>, "be confounded," substantially the same idea. He who rests on Him shall not have the shame of disappointment, nor flee in sudden panic (see <Isa. 30:15; 32:17>). Contrast Jehu's precipitate zeal, not based on real belief <2 Kin. 9:20; 10:27-31>, and therefore like a blaze in straw-- after great show, soon going out.

At this point the Apostle Peter made another statement with reference to all believers which gives added emphasis to the close relationship, actually the union, between Christ and His church.

IV. ALL BELIEVERS (1 Pet. 2:7a).

I am referring now to those first words of verse 7: “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”

Putting all of this together, to God Christ is a living Stone, and we, too, are living stones. And to God, Christ is precious, and those of us who believe in Christ feel the same way about Him: He is precious to us. And in relation to our salvation, Christ is precious to us because there is no one who can save us except Christ. And He not only saves us, but He keeps us saved. The world may hate and despise Him, but we love Him. He is the dearest of all to us. No one can possibly take His place in our hearts.

And this is one way that you and I can test whether or not we are saved. How do we feel about Christ? Do we love Him? Could we even stand the thought that we might lose Him? Peter said, and said most truthfully, “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”

But now, finally, we come to a most solemn conclusion to this text, and it has to those who are

V. THE DISOBEDIENT (1 Pet. 2:7b-8).

Do you remember what we learned from chapter 1, verse 22, about purifying our souls by obeying the truth? We obey the truth when we do what we are told to do in order to be saved, and that is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so those who are “disobedient” (see verse 7) are those who do not believe in Christ. They are not trusting in the Lord Jesus for their salvation.

Peter wanted them to know that the stone which “the builders” in Israel have “disallowed,” rejected, disapproved, in spite of their opposition, “the same is made the head of the corner.” The rejection of men, even the national rejection of the nation Israel, has not kept God from making our Lord “the head of the corner.” And instead of becoming “precious” to the “disobedient,” He has become “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence” because they have stumbled “at the Word.” And here the Apostle Peter, as I mentioned earlier, was quoting again from the OT – actually twice! The latter part of verse 7 is from Psa. 118:22, and the first part of verse 8 is from Isa. 8:14.

We have this same combination in Rom. 9:30-33 where we read,

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the

righteousness which is of faith.

31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Many people stumble over Christ. They can't believe that His death would have anything to do with their acceptance with God. They can't believe that their condition is so hopeless that it would take the death of Christ on the Cross to save them. They stumble over Christ because they cannot believe that faith in Christ is the only way of salvation. People argue all of the time that people in other religions who are sincere and who try to do their best, will be accepted with God. They stumble over Christ. And they stumble over the Word of God.

Sometimes people who stumble initially have a change of heart, and later believe in Christ. But those who never receive the Savior, are those, as the Apostle Peter said here, who were "appointed" to eternal death. People demonstrate by their disallowance of Christ that they are both appointed to death and totally deserving of death. God made Christ the chief cornerstone of salvation over all of the opposition of men, and God has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens against the Gospel. Some are chosen for salvation, and the others are appointed to death.

Concl: This is also truth that causes people to stumble, but let me point out to you that this is the teaching of Scripture. To stumble at the Word of God, is to stumble at the sovereignty of God in salvation. And to stumble at the sovereignty of God in salvation is to stumble at Christ.

Let me conclude by reading to you from Romans 9 where it is clear that the Apostle Paul believed what Peter has expressed here at the end of the eighth verse of our text. Paul's words are found in Romans 9:14-24. And let us all remember that these words, as difficult as they usually are for us to accept, are just as much a part of the Word of God as John 3:16.

(Read Rom. 9:14-24.)

Remember that God is sovereign in salvation. He purposed to make His Son the Chief Cornerstone in salvation. Men objected, and killed the

Prince of life. But God raised Him from the dead, and has made Him the Chief Cornerstone. In the same way God has an elect people who will surely be saved. Many of us have rebelled against the Gospel when it was first presented to us, but God has overcome our resistance, has granted us repentance, and has given us the gift of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And so to God be all the glory for our salvation.

At the same time we are commissioned to preach the Gospel to every creature, that “whosoever believeth on Him [Christ] shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” We may have trouble reconciling the two, but both are Biblical. Let us trust God that He is working out His purposes in the salvation of every person whose sins the Lord Jesus put away.