

Christ, the Cornerstone

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[0:00] Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. So one thing I think that we would all have to admit is that sometimes our own experiences, our own personalities, and maybe even our own foibles cause certain aspects of biblical passages to jump out at us.

I have to confess that our text for this morning did something like that for me, if I'm being honest. All this mention of stumbling jumps out to me in a personal way.

I am more than a little bit accident prone. Getting up in the middle of the night is always a fearful thing for me, because it's very likely that my little toe is going to find a way to connect with the doorframe or with the couch leg.

With devastating results. Or the sole of my foot will find one of me as Legos. Parents, if that has ever happened to you, you know the incredible pain I'm talking about.

[1:24] Yeah, that's right. Can I get an amen? Amen. Now a few weeks ago I found out that unfortunately the apple does not fall that far from the tree.

My darling Mia had an all too familiar experience. She was playing barefoot and suddenly she came up to me whimpering. So when I asked her what had happened, she responded in biblical language.

I dashed my foot against a stone. Story of my life. Sorry little one. Now Jesus, as both cornerstone and stone of stumbling, is at the core of this morning's text.

Put it simply, the stone that is Christ cannot be avoided. Either we will be in Christ, with Christ as our strong and sure foundation, or we will stumble.

Peter this morning is telling us to cling to Christ as our foundation. So that we will not be like those who stumble. He's telling us to be like living stones built upon the foundation of Christ the living stone.

[2:44] And to be holy as he is holy. So let's look at our text and see what living as living stones looks like.

Verse 1. So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Now this passage begins with that. Now this passage begins with that.

Frequent reminder we see throughout 1 Peter. Don't live the way that you used to live. Now I think we'd have to admit that malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander are fairly common problems.

It's probably why Peter starts with those. We're to be on guard against that. Don't be malicious. Don't be hateful. Don't be angry. Don't be dishonest and deceitful.

Don't be hypocritical. Don't be jealous. Don't be envious. Don't slander others. Don't engage in backbiting or putting others down.

[3:56] Don't be honest. Now we only have to flip on the news or some kind of talk show to see that this kind of behavior that Peter is telling us to renounce is the way of the fallen world.

Peter's hearers also would have known that this was the way that they lived too before they knew Jesus. But we shouldn't be any of those things and we don't need to be any of those things.

Why? Why would we need to be angry or jealous or deceitful? Don't we have everything that we need in Jesus?

Don't we have hope? Don't we have forgiveness? Don't we find mercy and joy? What is there to be angry about? Why be jealous? What do we need that we don't have?

God in Christ has dealt mercifully with us. Has dealt graciously with us. Has forgiven our sins and received us as his own beloved children through his son Jesus Christ.

[5:02] Even though we don't deserve it. Why wouldn't we be kind, compassionate, honest, forgiving with others?

Isn't that precisely how God has been with us? So we're to put all of that away. Leave it behind. Let go of carrying that heavy load and burden of anger and malice. And turn to what instead? We see that in verses 2 and 3. Now have you tasted that the Lord is good?

So we are to leave anger and malice. All of that behind us because we have been born again. We're like newborn infants as Peter puts it. We're like newborn infants so we turn from what we knew before in our former old life.

What could never satisfy us. We turn from that to pure spiritual milk. To find our nourishment in the word of God and to find our sustenance in the gospel. If we are going to live as God's hopeful and holy people in the world as Peter is instructing us to do.

[6 : 28] We absolutely have to be grounded in the word of God. Grounded in the gospel. Or else we will have no solid foundation. If we don't get the gospel right.

Don't get the word of God right. We won't get holy living right either. We don't know the word of God. It will be as if we're building our houses on the sand.

What do I mean by that? About knowing the gospel being foundational to holiness. Recently I ran across a quote from the reformer and theologian Martin Luther.

He was talking about the gospel. He tended to do that a lot. Luther wrote, I must listen to the gospel. It tells me not what I must do.

But what Jesus Christ the son of God has done for me. Now that is pure spiritual milk that will see us through to maturity and holiness.

[7 : 36] We have forgiveness not through what we have done. But through the blood of Jesus Christ shed for us. For his perfect obedience on our behalf.

If we are not grounded in that. Nourished by that. Then any attempt at holiness will be bound to fail. Because we'll be driven to seek God's favor by our own works.

By our own goodness. On the other hand. When we realize that we have God's favor. Even though we're sinners.

And only because of what Jesus has done. Then we're free to serve him. To seek to live as his holy people. Out of joy and gratitude.

Not the grudging obligation. We have to begin with. And never turn away from. The gospel. And the word of God. We must remain centered in Christ.

[8 : 35] Centered on the gospel. Learning from the pure word of God. This is the only way that we will ever leave behind what we knew before.

Because holiness is God's work in us, isn't it? It's not something that we work up on our own. We talked about that last week. We are being built up as individual believers.

As a church. By God himself. On the foundation of his son Jesus Christ. It's what we see in our next verses. Verses 4 and 5. As you come to him.

A living stone rejected by men. But in the sight of God. Chosen and precious. You yourselves like living stones. Are being built. Up as a spiritual house.

To be a holy priesthood. To offer spiritual sacrifices. Acceptable to God. Through Jesus Christ. Now there's a lot to unpack there. I could spend the next several weeks on that probably.

[9 : 42] Christ is called a living stone. Rejected by men. But chosen and precious. Of God. As we go on to see.

We as believers. Called living stones. A couple of things. Jump out. If we are living stones. It is because we are united through faith.

With the living stone. Jesus Christ. Who is a living stone. And we could say a life giving stone. We are living stones. Through the living stone.

Called into loving union with him. And called to be like him. We also see the common reality. That what is chosen by God.

Is rejected by men. And that men are inclined to reject. What God regards as precious. Now it's not surprising. That what God has chosen.

[10 : 42] Is rejected by men. We are sinners by nature. In our natural state. We are blinded. By the evil one. Until God's grace. Acts to open our eyes to the truth.

We are bound to reject the truth. Even the son of God. The Lord Jesus Christ. Was rejected and crucified. By men. As we see in our passage. Yet in him.

We as believers. Are chosen. And precious to God. We as believers. Have become living stones. And the living stone. And it's not because we're anything special.

If anything. We are reminded that God has chosen the foolish things of this world. And that means us. We are God's fools. And he chose to save the foolish things of this world.

Through the foolishness of the cross. We are living stones. We are living stones. Through Jesus. Built on the foundation of Jesus.

[11:43] As a spiritual house. As a priesthood. To offer sacrifices to God. Now what Peter is doing here. Is drawing our minds back to remembrance of the temple in the Old Testament.

The temple. The temple. The temple. Was the house of the Lord. It was the spiritual house. The place of God's presence. The place. Where the priests. On behalf of the people. Operated sacrifices to God.

But of course. The one sacrifice of our great high priest Jesus. Rendered the temple obsolete. When as he died.

The veil of the temple was torn in two. Now what Peter is saying here then. Is absolutely radical. We.

As believers. As the church. As the body of Christ. Have become the temple. Through faith in what Jesus has done. God's presence can be found. In and with us.

[12:40] And we have been called to be priests. Having been cleansed from sin. Through the sacrifice of Jesus. On the cross. We are now called to offer our lives. As a sacrifice of praise to God.

Because of what he has done for us. Because of the sacrifice of our great high priest Jesus. We are also priests. In the great high priest.

Meaning that we now have access. To come boldly before the throne of God. By the blood of his son. And how wonderful is that. Certainly.

This priesthood to which we have all been called. As believers. Is costly. Because we are called to offer nothing less. Than our whole selves. Just this past week.

I read about. Christians in Nigeria. Being attacked for their faith. That's a common occurrence. And it's been happening very recently. Now we in America.

[13:39] Haven't yet been called to offer our lives in this way. Or at least most of us haven't. But that is a possibility. That Christians always have to be ready for. But we are to give our lives as an offering to God.

Either way. Aren't we? But. No matter how costly it is. Isn't it worth it? We have intimacy with our God.

We have a relationship with him. We are his beloved children. And we have forgiveness. And the promise of eternal life. All because of what Jesus has done for us.

Back to our text. Peter goes on to quote Isaiah 28. To demonstrate his point. For it stands in scripture. Behold I am laying in Zion a stone.

A cornerstone chosen and precious. And whoever believes in him. Will not be put to shame. Now I have to confess.

[14:38] That I'm not of much use. When it comes to building stuff. I'm not sure I could build a birdhouse. If my life depended on it. But we have some experts.

On building things. In our midst here. Would one of our experts. Care to share with us. What a cornerstone is. I'm looking. I'll look at you Randy.

Wonderful. That's what I was hoping you would say. We are built on Christ. He holds us together. He is our foundation.

And we can be certain. That if we truly believe in him. We will never be put to shame. We have no reason to fear. We have the full assurance of forgiveness.

The assurance of victory over sin. Death. And the devil. And the assurance that in Christ. We are more than conquerors. Through him who loved us. I'm reminded here of the words to a great hymn.

[15:43] Christ is made the sure foundation. Christ the head and cornerstone. Chosen of the Lord and precious. Binding all the church in one. Holy Zion's hope forever.

And her confidence alone. Christ is our foundation. Christ is our head and cornerstone. Christ is our help. Christ is our only confidence.

With Christ on our side. How could we be put to shame? On the other hand. If we do not believe. We are sure to stumble.

As Peter quotes Psalm 118. In Isaiah 8. In verses 7 and 8. He says. So the honor is for you who believe. But for those who do not believe.

The stone that the builders rejected. Has become the cornerstone. And a stone of stumbling. And a rock of offense. And they stumble because they disobey the word.

[16 : 42] As they were destined to do. Now I'm looking at you for a minute teenagers. Because in Sunday school. We have been talking about the way that leads to life.

And the way that leads to death. We see it. Right in front of us. In this passage. There is no neutral ground. We are always on one of those two paths.

We can't be neutral. When it comes to Jesus. Either we know him. We believe in him. As our sure and certain foundation. Or we stumble by disobeying the word.

And refusing to believe in Christ. As Peter himself says. The rulers and elders and scribes. In Acts 4. Speaking of Jesus. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you.

The builders. Which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven.

[17 : 40] Given among men. By which we must be saved. There is salvation. In no one else. If we look for it elsewhere.

We won't find it. We'll only stumble and fall to our own destruction. In contrast to those who disobey the word.

And stumble. Peter has this to say about believers. Verses 9 and 10. You are a chosen race. A royal priesthood. A holy nation.

A people for his own possession. That you may proclaim the excellencies of him. Who called you out of darkness. Into his marvelous light.

You are chosen. Precious to God. You are a royal priesthood. Kings and priests to God. You are God's holy people.

[18 : 35] You are his own. Now Peter here. Is describing New Testament believers. In the same way that Israel. Was described in the Old Testament. Given that he had just referenced the temple.

That shouldn't be surprising. But. If we read the Old Testament. We see that Israel often forgot.

That they were called to be God's holy people. Didn't they? They often turned. To false gods. To idolatry. To pagan practices. To all kinds of ungodliness.

Not only that. But they forgot that they were called. Not just for their own benefit. But to be a light to the whole world. So that the whole world. Would see and glorify the one true God.

So Peter. Not wanting us to repeat that mistake. He's reminding the church. To live as God's holy people. And to proclaim the power of the gospel.

[19 : 38] And the glory of God. To the whole world. A world that needs it. Because it's in darkness. As those who have been called out of the darkness. And into his marvelous light.

We're to remember where we've been. In the darkness. But also where we are. And where we're going. His marvelous light. Because of God's mercy to us.

In Jesus. Now Peter drives this point home. Referencing the book of Hosea. Where he writes. Once you were not a people.

But now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy. But now. You have received mercy. Think about what we were.

Where we were. We weren't a people. We had no hope. And were without God in the world. Now.

[20 : 36] God has called us together. To be his people. To bear witness to the hope. That is only found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Once.

We hadn't received mercy. We were rebels. Alienated from God. We were God's enemies. Yet God loved us. Gave his only son for us.

So that we might receive the mercy. That we didn't deserve. And weren't even looking for. How awesome is that? So as a holy nation.

Which has received mercy. And is called. To proclaim the excellencies of Christ. How should we live in the world? Verse 11. We read. Beloved.

I urge you. As sojourners. And exiles. To abstain from the passions of the flesh. Which wage war against your soul. Now the fallen world.

[21 : 33] Is in captivity. To the passions of the flesh. If you doubt that. You just have to turn on your television.

In captivity to the pursuit of sinful pleasure. The fallen world. Is not our home. We're sojourners.

We're exiles. Our citizenship. Is in heaven. So we shouldn't live. As those who are in captivity. Not only that.

We should live as witnesses. As examples. To the world. As we proclaim the truth. As we see in verse 12. Keep your conduct.

Among the Gentiles. Honorable. So that when they speak. Against you. As evildoers. They may see your good deeds. And glorify God. On the day of visitation.

[22:31] Now Jesus said. That if the world hated him. The world would hate his disciples. That hurts. But.

If we're going. To be hated. Or persecuted. It should be. For doing good deeds. To the glory of God. Not for being dishonorable jerks. Although that's not.

Not the term that. Peter uses in Greek. God's holy nation. Faithfully. Proclaiming the excellencies of him. Who called us.

Out of darkness. That's who we are. That's how we're called to live. Now our verses this morning. Give us a lot of comfort. Don't they?

But they also. Present us with some challenges. First. Each of us. Must ask. Do I believe in Jesus?

[23:28] Is he my sure foundation? Is he my cornerstone? And if the answer is no. Then we can be sure. That we are headed for stumbling. For falling. For shame.

Because there is salvation. In no one else. Only in Jesus. If there is anyone hearing this.

Who does not know Jesus as Lord and Savior. I urge you to place your faith in him. Not later. Not someday. Right now. The damage done by the stumbling we'll do.

Outside of faith in Jesus. Is too devastating for us to delay. If we are believers. We then have to ask. Am I living as a member of God's holy people should live?

Have I put away all malice? And all deceit. And hypocrisy. And envy. And all slander. Or am I still living as one who is in captivity?

[24:28] To the passions of the flesh? Ultimately. We each have to ask. Am I holding anything back? From the spiritual sacrifices I'm supposed to be offering to God.

The worship that I owe him. And the gift of my whole life. What is it in my life that I'm holding back? What's keeping me from giving my whole self to his service?

Are we ready to confess this morning the sins that are holding us back? Are we willing to offer our lives more fully to God than ever before?

Brothers and sisters. We have received mercy. That we didn't deserve. God is at work in us. Both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

We are being nourished by the pure milk of the word of God. We are being built up as a spiritual house. And we have Christ as our sure cornerstone. We have everything that we need.

[25:38] So let's offer our whole selves. Our whole lives. As a sacrifice. To the one who has claimed us as his own. Through the sacrifice of his only son.

To God be the glory. In the name of the Father. And of the Son. And of the Holy Spirit. Amen.