

The Cornerstone

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 November 2015

Preacher: Benjamin van Rensburg

[0 : 00] What shall stand the power of the Lord to the Lord in the name of the King?

O death will be for her message, my dear, thou mayest be.
My great heart of all, my soul of great, my holy sin is burned.
O God, may I, O Lord, in wars, my soul prays for the Lord.
My single God, may I, to watch the holy light to see.

[1 : 31] Let this I have, O let the Lord for his mercy see.

Come on. Let the God's redemption is the Lord of the Lord.
Let the Lord of the Lord be with you.
Let the Lord be with you. Let the Lord be with you.
Let the Lord be with you.

[3 : 26] She had a lot of potential. He saw that she was an intelligent woman, and he decided to send her to school. And she did very well while she was at school, so well that she won a scholarship to come and study for one year in Glasgow.

And she came, and most of her classes were in English so that she could really learn to speak English properly. She didn't grow up speaking English.
She spoke French and Arabic, but she quickly learned English, and she thought that she would be able to continue her education in the UK.
But during that year, her father contacted her, and he said that he arranged for her to marry somebody. And obviously she was very reluctant because she didn't know the person, but she also then discovered that the person was much older than her, and that the whole marriage was part of a business arrangement that her father had with this individual man.
So she refused to go home, and she continued her study here. Her father then, of course, became very upset, and he disowned her.

[4 : 47] And she kind of realized that she would never be able to go back to her home country. After she completed her year, she was hoping to continue, but she wasn't granted a visa, so she ended up being in a detention center in the south of England.

And there she met with an English couple who tried to encourage her. She was going through some other personal crises also in her life, and she felt very down.

And she discovered that this couple had a living relationship with the Lord, and they shared with her, but she continued to see herself as a staunch Muslim.

And eventually she was deported from the UK, and she ended up back in Morocco. But she was very fearful, and she knew she could not dare to contact her father or any of her brothers, so she was just in hiding in Morocco.

And then she had communications with somebody in Turkey that she met here and became a Facebook friend of her. And that person said, well, why don't you come to Istanbul?

[6 : 07] And we know that there is a shelter for vulnerable women, and perhaps they will take you in and you can stay there. And that's exactly what she did. And while she was there on a Christmas day, she remembered the testimony of the English couple in England.

And just by herself, she surrendered her life to the Lord. And she said, I want to become a follower of Christ Jesus. And she contacted the family, and she said, this is what happened to me.

And they were overjoyed, and they went on the Internet, and they found our website, and they sent her to our church. And a few months later, after we prepared her, she was baptized.

And also this family from England, they joined the service where she was baptized, and she became very involved in our church. And when you think about her, you realize that she's an individual who lost her home.

She didn't really have a home here in the UK. She couldn't stay here. She couldn't go back to Morocco. She lost her home there.

[7 : 24] And yet, in a very special way, she found a spiritual home. And that home was created through her relationship and her new faith in Christ Jesus.

And a homeless person found a home where she can be at home, wherever she may be in the world. And when Peter is writing to the churches in the northern part and central part of Turkey, he is very aware of the fact that they also, to a great extent, have lost their earthly homes.

The mere fact that they became Christians put them against society. And sometimes their own families turned against them. People were suspicious of them.

People were slandering them. In the first century, like it is today in the Middle East, connections and networking was very important. And it was almost impossible to function unless you're part of a group and association.

And everybody needed a patron. And patrons needed to have clients who could work for them and support them. And build them up. And if these connections disappeared, it was very difficult to live your life.

[8 : 43] And Peter is writing to the churches. And he said he knows what they were going through, that they have lost their home.

And being at home and feeling at home because of their faith in Christ Jesus. And then in verse 4, he wrote to them and he said, As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God, chosen and precious.

And then he continues and he says that they should, they themselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house.

So he's saying that as they come to Christ, in a spiritual sense, it's also a home coming. That now there is a living stone.

And through this living stone, they are also built up in the building that God is building in this world. And they will find a home for themselves.

[9 : 48] But it's interesting that Peter here referred to the living stone, to Christ. And when we look at the Old Testament, we see that we find there a stone complex.

That often there was a reference to the stone. We read, for example, in Isaiah 28, 16 and 17, the following. Therefore, thus says the Lord, see I will for the foundations of Zion, a precious stone, a choice stone, a highly valued cornerstone for its foundations.

And the one who believes in him will not be put to shame. And I will turn judgment into hope. And you see here, Isaiah is expressing the hope that one day there will be a stone.

And those who believe, or those who believe in him, as the Alex says it, will not be put to shame. And I will turn judgment into hope.

And the people, when they heard these words, the godly people, they would have understood that this point to the coming of the Messiah. And later this morning, we will sing from Psalm 118.

[11 : 03] And there, in the psalm, there is a reference to the stone that was rejected by the builders that became the capstone.

And that psalm is also associated with the expectation that one day the king of kings will come. The Messiah will come and bring salvation.

On occasion, Jesus told a parable to the people. And he said to the people that one day there was a man, a landowner.

And he planted a vineyard. And he built a pit for the wine press. And he built a tower. And he planted a hedge around his field.

So he made proper preparations for whoever wanted to really rent this piece of land. And then, after a while, he sent a servant to go and collect part of the produce of this land.

[12 : 08] And that was the way how rent was often paid in the first century. And normally, people would simply have given to the servant what was due to the owner.

But these people acted in an irresponsible way and in a surprising way. And they beat up the servant. And they sent him home. And the owner said, I will send somebody else.

And he sent another servant. And this time, they wound him to his head. And they sent him home.

And then he said, well, I will send another servant. And he sent another servant. And this time, they killed the servant.

And then the owner said, I will send my beloved son. And again, the beloved son was killed. And Jesus here is referring to how he sent his representatives to the world and how they were rejected. And in the end, the Son of God came. And he lost his life. He was killed. And when Jesus told this parable, he said the following.

[13:11] And he said, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing. And it is marvelous in our eyes.

And he associates himself here fully with the expectation of the Old Testament that one day the Messiah would come. He is the living stone.

He is the living stone, the cornerstone, the capstone of the building. But strikingly, we read in verse 4, as you come to him, a living stone, rejected by men, but in the sight of God, chosen and precious.

And the striking thing here is that the people didn't recognize the stone. And they refused to accept the stone. But in God's eyes, the stone was precious.

One of the major buildings in Istanbul is the Hagia Sophia Church. This was built in the 6th century. And for 1,000 years, it was the largest church in the world.

[14:18] And in 1452, it was changed into a mosque. And in 1925, around that time, it was changed into a museum.

And it is still a museum today. And when you visit the church, people will show you around. The guides will show you around. And then they will point out and they will say, this column comes from Egypt.

Or this was part of the buildings in Ephesus. And when they built the church, they thought that they could use these stones in this building.

And that was the practice of the day, that whenever somebody wanted to build a house, it was difficult to cut stones. So the first thing they would do is to look around.

The builders would look around to stones that would be suitable for their building project. And then they would use that stone. But you can also imagine that there were stones that they looked at and they thought, this is no use for us.

[15:23] And they would simply throw those stones aside. So in a sense, we find that in this world, there are two building projects.

The one is the Thames of humankind. And as they built their world and as they built their lives, they look at the stone, Christ Jesus.

And they said, we have no use for him. And they cast him aside. And they said, Jesus has nothing to offer to us that will be useful to us, that we need.

They may even know about the cross and the resurrection of Christ Jesus. And still, they will say, this has nothing to do with us. I remember a few years ago, I was at the airport in Edinburgh.

And one of the people in the waiting room, he was very talkative. And he was talking to a number of people. And he was speaking quite loud. And I could quickly learn that he was from Scotland and that he has a wife that is Turkish.

[16:34] And she's living in Istanbul. And he was going back to see her. And when I got on the plane, I saw that the gentleman was sitting in the same row of seats as I did.

And he was sitting at the window, I was at the aisle. And a man from Iraq came and sat between us. And they started to talk. And eventually, the conversation turned to religion.

And the Scottish man, he was trying to tell the Muslim from Iraq that it was useless for him to believe in any god. And he continued his argument.

And it became very clear to me that this man, that he knows a lot about Christianity. He must have gone to Sunday school and church as a child because he seemed to know the gospel.

And yet, he completely rejected it. And he had no use for the work of Christ, for the person of Christ, for the death on the cross, for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

[17:40] And at the same time, we can see that God is building a building in this world. And when he looked at Christ, Christ is the catchstone, the precious stone, the living stone of his building.

You will remember when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, what did the Father say? This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

During the transfiguration, again, he said, this is my beloved son. Listen to him, not to Elijah, not to Moses. When it comes to the kingdom of God, Christ is the one who will lead us in.

Christ is the one in whom the whole law and the prophets came into fulfillment. This is my beloved son. Listen to him.

So in the building that God is building in this world, Jesus is central. And Peter continues and he says that for those who accept the stone, it means salvation.

[18 : 54] And they will be part of God's spiritual building and they will receive life from him. But there will be those who will look at the same stone and they will reject it.

And for them, the stone will be a stumbling stone. They will fall over it. The cross of Christ will be a stumbling stone for them because they rejected it.

They refused to obey the word of God. In verse 5 we read, You yourself, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.

The people, they were resident aliens, strangers in this home, strangers in this world, homeless, spiritually, physically, without Christ.

And then they receive salvation. And they themselves become living stones in this building. And the implication is that they receive life from Christ.

[19 : 58] New life, eternal life. Life in abundance that in the midst of the difficulties that they experience, that they could live in a new way.

Experiencing the joy of the Lord, the peace of the Lord. But also real purpose and meaning in their lives. But in order to have this life, they need to be connected.

They need to be in the same building as Jesus Christ. In the building that God built in this world.

The reality is that when we think of homes in this world, and maybe some of the homes that we live in is hundreds of years old.

The building where we live in Istanbul was built more than a hundred years ago. And many people have worked there. Many people have lived there. And yet, in the light of God's word, we have to say it's only a tent.

It's only a temporary dwelling. And ultimately, for all of us, our real home, our eternal home, is the spiritual house that God is building through Christ Jesus, where Christ is the living stone giving life to us.

[21 : 21] It's quite interesting that Peter here, he says, you yourself, like living stones, are being built as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.

And this word priesthood is unique to 1 Peter 2. It's only in verse 5 and 9 that you find this word, and you find it nowhere else in the New Testament.

And Peter is borrowing here again from the Greek translation of the Old Testament. And this word was used in Exodus 19.

So let's read from Exodus 19. And we will read from verse 1. On the third new moon, after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, On that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.

They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai. And they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, while Moses went up to God.

[22 : 23] The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel, You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, And how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself.

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice, and keep my covenant, You shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, For all the earth is mine.

And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel. And it is here that God started to give the people after the Exodus, Their true identity.

Their theological identity. And he said that you will be my special possession among the nations. And the implication is that the people would represent God among the nations.

But he also says that you will be for me a kingdom of priests. And when the people in Egypt, When they realized that many of the Jews who were living there in the Dei Sporup, That they didn't speak Hebrew anymore, and couldn't read the scriptures, They decided to translate the Old Testament into Greek, So that people could read it and understand it.

[23 : 50] And that's how the LXX, or the Greek translation of the Old Testament, was born. And they came to this concept of a kingdom of priests. And they thought, What Greek word shall we use to convey the meaning of this word?

And they looked at the Greek language, and they couldn't find a suitable word. So they created a new word by combining several other words. And this new word, they conveyed the idea that the people of God, That they were members of his priesthood.

And remember here that when Moses said these words, When God instructed him to tell the people, It was for the whole nation. We know that later on, a certain tribe were the priests of God, And they served in the temple.

But here it's the whole nation that is in focus. And God is saying, All of you will be members of my priesthood. And the idea was that they would stand in a special relationship with God, And also that they will have a responsibility towards the world.

And that special relationship with God, Meant that they would worship him, That they would obey him, And that their lives should be surrendered to God Almighty.

[25 : 11] But given the condition of our hearts, And the hearts of the people of God in the Old Testament, We see just how difficult that was.

To surrender yourself to God. I think it's something that we can sing about, Something that we can talk about, But to do it, it's very difficult.

And sometimes when we first come to faith, We surrender to God, And we give our lives to him, But then shortly afterwards, A process of repossession starts.

And we want to take back our rights. I remember years ago, I was sitting in our sitting room in Istanbul, And I was watching the news on television.

And I have two daughters, Sarah and Rachel. And Rachel, at the time, She's the youngest one, She was five years old. And as I was watching the news, I think it was the President of the United States, Was giving an important speech.

[26 : 18] And suddenly, The channel changed, And there was a cartoon on. And for a moment, I was confused about what happened. And then I looked at Rachel, And I saw she had the remote control in her hand.

And I said to her, What are you doing? And she said, I changed the channel. And I said to her, Well, That's not nice to do. You can't just change the channel If somebody is watching something else. And she said, Well, I wanted to watch my program. And I said to her, No, You can't do it. You know, I was watching the news. You can't change the channel.

And she said to me, I can't, Because the television is mine. And I said to her, No, The television is not yours. In order for you to possess something, Somebody needed to give it to you, Or you needed to buy it with your own money.

And neither of this took place. So the television is mine. And she didn't think that was a very good argument. And she continued to argue.

[27 : 23] And eventually, She saw the light. And she said to me, Okay, Daddy, The television is yours. But the remote control is mine. And when I heard that, I thought that That's often What we do with God.

We say that we surrender Our lives to him. But we keep the remote control. We still want to control Our own lives. But the idea of being a member Of God's holy priesthood Means that our lives Are surrendered to God.

That we serve him in this world. That our ambition And our desire Is to honor God. In the Old Testament, That meant Obeying the laws of God.

To reflect the holiness of God To the nations around the world. So that they will be drawn To God Almighty. And it meant That we have A responsibility To the people Around us.

To serve them As members Of his priesthood. The implication would be For the believers As they Live their lives. That they Would serve As household Servants in homes For example.

[28 : 39] But as they Serve there. That they Also Would recognize That they Are a member Of God's priesthood In that house.

And that they Also The priest Of the person For whom They work. So the person Was not just An employer And the relationship Was not just Of an employer And an employee But also That of a member Of God's Holy and royal Priesthood Seeking to Represent God In that Situation So that people Can be drawn To Christ Jesus.

And Peter He is using This new Greek word That was created By the translators Of the Greek Old Testament And he said That you are Members of God's Holy priesthood.

And then he Continues And he said Your responsibility Is to offer Spiritual sacrifices Acceptable to God Through Jesus Christ.

So he said You have a new Title You have A new Identity But also You have a new Responsibility. And he used Cultic or worship Language here And he said This is to Bring spiritual Sacrifices Acceptable to God Through Jesus Christ.

[29 : 59] Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament People brought Sacrifices And the sacrifices Were acceptable To God If they Were prepared And brought According to The stipulations Of the law.

When you read The book of Leviticus It described In detail How these Sacrifices Should be brought. In chapter 1 8 for example There is a long Description And in verse 8 We read And Aaron's son The priest Shall arrange The pieces The head And the fat On the wood That is under fire On the altar But its entails And its legs He shall wash With water And the priest Shall burn All of it On the altar As a burning Offering A food offering With a pleasing Aroma To the Lord And this pleasing Aroma To the Lord Means that It was acceptable To God Peter is saying That as believers We should Not bring Real sacrifices But spiritual Sacrifices And they Become acceptable To God Through Jesus Christ So what What are These Spiritual Sacrifices And actually Quite a few

Times in the New Testament We come across This concept Of spiritual Sacrifices In Revelation It refers to Prayer In Hebrews 8-15 To praise And thanksgiving In Romans 12-1 You will remember It refers to Really surrendering Our lives To God In the fullest Sense of The word In Timothy It refers to Martyrdom In Ephesians It describes Brotherly love And kindness And all this Help us To understand What Peter Is meaning Here With bringing Spiritual sacrifices As members Of God's Priesthood To God Acceptable Through Christ Jesus But in the Context here It is quite Clear That it also Means being A witness To the world And in order To be an Effective witness To the world To be willing To sacrifice To be willing To pay a price If you look At the structure

Of this passage You will see There is a Relationship Between verse 5 and verse 9 And in verse 9 we read That you are The chosen race Of God A holy Or a royal Priesthood You are the Chosen You are the Holy people Of God And you are Also his Special possession And then it Says to show For the excellencies Or the great Deeds of God And then it Said that Who called you Out of darkness Into his Marvelous light And in the Light of what We read in Verse 9 We can include Into spiritual Sacrifices The need To be an Effective witness In society So that people Can be drawn To Christ But in the Process of being A faithful witness Also to pay A price To be a Sacrifice And this Becomes very Clear when we Look at chapter 2 Verse 18 Where Paul Specifically addressed The household Servants And he said

To them that You should Submit Show respect To your Owners Even though They may be Unjust And he must Have known How hard This would have Been for The slaves And then he Continues and he Said because This is what Christ Jesus Did for you He suffered Unjustly So that you Can be Redeemed And that you Can be Saved And if the Slaves The Christian Slaves Were known To be Disobedient And rebellious It would have Meant that the People would Look at the Church And they Would have Despised the Church And they Would have Said the Church just Produced Unfaithful Slaves And Peter Want the Slaves To adorn The gospel To make The gospel Attractive And he Said that You must Bring spiritual Sacrifices By being Obedient to Your masters Even when It is Difficult A few

[34 : 17] Years ago A Syrian Couple Joined our Church And they Came to Faith and Were baptized In Istanbul And sometime Later The wife In this Family She wrote Me a message And she Said the Following She said Hello Sir And her First language Is Arabic And not English But I Will read A letter As she Wrote it She said Hello Sir Two weeks Ago I met A poor Woman From Aleppo Working In my School She told Me that She's Very Poor And she's Really In need I told Her that She can Come to Moms And Tots Program Therefore She can Benefit Her Two Daughters Then she Asked me About The program I told Her They help You buy Malt Clothes Having Breakfast And sometimes They tell You a Bible Story The surprise Is that She's Very happy And she Told me That she Liked Working Dealing With Christians She said That 12 Years ago Her husband Used to Work for A Christian Boss And once He had Got disease

And stopped Working But a Christian Boss Kept giving Her husband His salary For four Months Till Recovering She said Christians Have got Mercy Upon People And when I heard The story I realized That in Syria There was A Christian Boss Who understood His responsibility As a member Of God's Holy and Royal priesthood And by Paying this Man which Was not The custom While he Was sick He showed Forth The great Deeds of The gospel And showed That he Was different And

in The process He certainly Paid the Price But through His actions He enhanced The gospel He adorned The gospel And he made It attractive In the lives Of people So that Years later When this Woman came To Istanbul And she Heard about The church Having programs She was Keen to Join This was

Such an Encouragement For the Syrian Lady and Her family Who were Newly Christians And were Newly Baptized In the Church There God Has set Us aside And we Belong To him We are Members Of his Holy And his Royal Priesthood We didn't Have a Home We never Will have A real Home In this World But Through Christ Jesus We are Built As living Stones Into A spiritual Home And God Gave us A new Identity We are Members Of his Priesthood So that We can Relate In a Special Way With him But also That we Can stand In a Relationship With our Neighbors And with The world Around us Representing God Wherever We may Go So that Other people Also Can hear The gospel And the Good news

Of Christ Jesus But all This Became Possible Through The work Of Christ Jesus On the Cross And indeed The stone That the Builders Rejected Became The capstone Of the Building And God Looked at Jesus Christ The God The Father And he Said this Is my Beloved Son And whom I'm Well Pleased Jesus He died For our Sins On the Cross So that We can Be Forgiven And live In a New Way As People With a New Identity Let's Pray Together Our Father In Heaven We We Thank You For The work Of Christ Jesus We Thank You For The New Life That You've Given Us We Thank You That You've Given Us A Home And Identity And Also A Responsibility In This World We Pray Lord That Your

World Your Word Will Grow In Our Hearts And That We Will Become More And More Faithful To You And That It Will Be Our Desire To Serve You And To Know You Better We Ask This In Jesus Name Amen Today We Have The Opportunity To Come To The Lord's Table And Partake In Communion We Can Take The Bread And Also The Wine And As We Do So We Declare That We Accept That It Was Necessary That Jesus Christ Also Died For Us That It Was Necessary For His Body To Be Broken For His Blood To Be Shed That It Was Necessary For Our Rescue That We Were Ransomed By God And That We Experienced His Redemption And His Salvation We Also [39 : 21] Declare That We Belong To God And That We Long To Serve Him And That We Have Confessed Where We Failed And That We Have Accepted And Experienced The Forgiveness Of God As We Prepare Our Hearts To Come To The Table Let's Sing Together From Psalm 118 And We Will Sing From Verse 15 In The Scottish Psalter And That's On Page 390 98 In Dwellings Of The Righteous Is Heard The Melody Of Joy And Health The Lord's Right Hand Dove Over Valiantly Psalm 118 From Verse 15 In The Scottish Psalter On Page 398 May Dwellings All

Are Riches To This Ever And O Peace Kind Number God Doesn't In