

# Our Cornerstone

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] If we can turn back to our reading in Isaiah chapter 28. I'm reading at the beginning of this section at verse 14. Isaiah 28 at verse 14, where we read, Therefore hear the word of the Lord, you scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem.

Because you have said, we have made a covenant with death and with Sheol, we have an agreement. When the overwhelming whip passes through, it will not come to us. We have made lies, our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter.

Therefore, thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation.

Whoever believes will not be in haste. You see a great contrast in these two verses. You hear the word of the people in the day.

We have made a covenant with death, they say. We have everything in our hands. We have this protection over ourselves. And we will find refuge in our lies.

[ 1 : 1 5 ] And then you see the contrast of that with what the Lord is saying in verse 16. Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone.

And really the contrast there is before us in where are the people finding their refuge? One, the people are making a refuge in their lies. And the other one is God calling the people to make their refuge with him.

And in the security of the precious cornerstone that has a sure foundation. A few weeks ago at the beginning of this month, we had a communion weekend where we came together and remembered the Lord's death together.

And we took part or many of us took part in the Lord's Supper. Many watched on perhaps as the Lord's Supper was dispensed. And part of coming to the Lord's Supper, to the Lord's Table, is when we are challenged to ask ourselves, where are we with the Lord?

We call it examining ourselves. And every one of us should do that as we come to the Lord's Table. But it should never be the only time we do it.

[ 2 : 3 4 ] Maybe it's highlighted at that time in a way where we think, well, can I go to the Lord's Table? And there's maybe a sense of that overwhelming feeling, I can't. I'm not worthy.

But even as we come away from the Lord's Table, as we go on, maybe looking ahead to the next one, do we wait until the next one comes round in August before we ask ourselves, am I worthy of sitting at the Lord's Table?

Am I any better than I was the last time when I didn't? Or even if I did sit there, maybe I'm feeling more unworthy now than I was then. We're examining ourselves all the time.

It's not just at one point as we approach the Lord's Supper. We should be examining ourselves on a daily basis. And examining ourselves in the light of God's Word.

In looking to this morning and the service we heard this morning, did you go home and examine yourself in light of what you heard? Did you take it in? Did you ponder it?

- [ 3 : 34 ] Did you think about it? Well, think about who is my example? Who am I looking to? Who am I seeking to follow? Who are the good people around me that I can learn from?
- Who can I encourage? How can I keep going? Did you examine yourself under all of these things that Gordon was preaching to us this morning under the heading of grace?
- Or even as we come this evening, do you come here to hear the Word of God? In the sense of, I'm going to go away and think about what I'm hearing. Think about what is being put before me again.
- And examine myself in light of this Word. And ask myself, where am I finding my refuge? Is it in the lies of this world? Or is it in this cornerstone, this precious stone that God shows to us as the person of Jesus Christ?
- As we look at Isaiah chapter 28 here, we find a people who are examining themselves. And they're examining themselves in light of everything that's going on around them.
- [ 4 : 40 ] And they're basically coming to the conclusion, as we so often see in Scripture, that, well, we can go on without God. We don't need God. We're going to make refuge, lies, a refuge.
- We're going to make falsehood the place where we take shelter. And it sounds absurd to us. And so it did to God in his day as well, because he comes and speaks to them in a very different way.
- And he assures them that there they will find no hope. And yet, when we see everything that's going on around us, and we think of the days of Isaiah, when the people were examining themselves in light of the standards of others around them, and thinking, we're going to go this way.
- We're going to do this. And we don't need God's help in the midst of this. We can decide ourselves. We look at our own nation. We look at the world in which we're living today, and we see the exact same ideas going on.
- We'll find refuge in our lies. We'll make falsehood the place where we take shelter. And we'll call it wisdom. We'll call it progress.
- [ 5 : 53 ] We'll call it we're getting on fine, and we'll put God out of the equation. But just as it was in the days of Isaiah, when God was warning of the seriousness of judgment that was upon the people, if they continued in this manner, so it is for ourselves today.
- Things are not at a distance from us this evening, where we think, well, it's not really impacting me, what our nation has decided, whether it's to do with infants, or whether it's to do with when we come to that point of dying in our lives, and who is in control.
- Or when we think of the wars and the rumors of wars that are going on around us, it's not at a distance. God is speaking. And God is speaking, not just to a few people in a few places.
- He is speaking to every one of us. Here and throughout the world, God is speaking to us. And he's showing us the kind of judgment that he can bring upon a people of this world.
- And none of us know how far that judgment might go. Often we get asked the question these days, do you think this is the end times?
- [ 7 : 07 ] So many people have that in the back of their minds. Is this it? We don't know. We don't know because the word of God doesn't tell us exactly when it will come.
- But it does give us instruction as to the kind of things that we're going to see before it does come. We're going to see the wickedness of man in so many different ways.
- The evil being poured out in our world. Much of it done in the name of progress and wisdom. But God is warning us.

God is warning us that yes, we are in the last days. We don't know when the Lord will return. We don't know how far things will go. But we know that we are living in the last days.

And the Lord is going to come. And when he comes, he will judge his people. And when we think of everything that's going on around us today, does it give us a sense of urgency?

[ 8 : 16 ] Does it make you ask this evening, where am I finding my refuge? Where am I looking in this world in which I'm living, in the life that I am living, where am I finding my hope?

Where am I finding what will give me hope? Not just for just now, but for eternity. We are being warned. The Lord is speaking.

And he is showing us a sense of his judgment upon us. But are we listening? Or are we like the people here in Isaiah who will say, no, we'll carry on and make lies our refuge.

The fool, as we sang in Psalm 14, the fool says in his heart, there is no God. And it is foolish to think that tonight, that there is no God.

But it's also foolish to know there is a God and not to take refuge in him. To say I'm not good enough to come to him.

[ 9 : 27 ] To say I'm too much of a sinner to come to him. That is foolishness. Because we need him. We can make different kinds of lies our refuge.

The lies of the world, but also the lies in our own heart. That God would have nothing to do with me. Or that I do not need God. We are fools to think that.

Instead, we should see what God is saying and saying to us here in verse 16, behold, I am the one who has laid us a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone of sure foundation.

There is this stone. And what he's speaking about here is not just a physical stone, as we would think, but he is speaking about the Lord Jesus as the cornerstone, the precious stone.

And it says at the end of this verse in 16, whoever believes will not be in haste, will not be in panic, but instead will have a calm and a peace because we know our refuge in Christ.

[ 10 : 40 ] So the difference is there for us to see. And this passage reminds us of what we have in Christ. And as we examine ourselves under God's word tonight to ask ourselves, how are we with God this evening?

Are we finding our refuge in him? Is he the precious cornerstone of my life in which I am taking refuge?

We look at ourselves and we panic. We look at ourselves and we feel fear. But what are we to do? We are to do as Robert Murray McShane once said.

He was a minister in Dundee, died at a young age in his twenties. But he once said this, for every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ.

For he is altogether lovely, such infinite majesty, and yet such meekness and grace, and all for sinners, even the chief of sinners.

[ 11 : 48 ] For every look at yourself, take ten looks to Christ. And so as we look at God's word this evening, let's not just look at ourselves.

But let's look at this precious cornerstone that is Jesus Christ our Lord. And there see where we can find a place of refuge, a place of calm.

But the first thing we want to see about this stone as we look at it this evening, the stone that is Christ, is the first thing we think about is the stone that is rejected, that we sang of in Psalm 118.

The psalmist there is closely tied in with what Isaiah is saying about the cornerstone. In verse 22 of Psalm 118, the stone the builders had refused, had rejected, it has become the cornerstone.

But you see, first of all, it was rejected by many. And this chapter, chapter 28 of Isaiah, is really showing the judgment that is coming upon the people.

[ 13 : 05 ] It's right throughout the first half of Isaiah up to chapter 40. You see the judgment that is about to come. Then from chapter 40 onwards, you see the Lord then calling his people back to himself in the midst of judgment.

But here it is still to come. There is the warning. In many ways, that's where we are tonight as well. We are under the warning of the judgment of God.

And in verse 14, as we come in this chapter, it says, therefore, and so it's showing, it's important what has just been said in the beginning of the chapter.

Under this judgment that you are under, therefore it says, hear the word of the Lord. Hear what the Lord is saying. And what you find is, what's happened is, the people are rejecting God.

They are turning away from God. And it's happened in Isaiah's day among the religious leaders as well as the political leaders. They've all turned away from God.

[ 14 : 17 ] And the rot has set in. And that is what we see to this very day. God is judging this nation because the people, the leaders, have turned away from God.

At the time of national crisis in the midst of the people in Isaiah's day, a time when the nation was coming under threat, the people, instead of turning to God, turned away from him.

And you see, in verse 14, it says, hear the word of the Lord, you scoffers. You scoffers there mean that this is a repeated practice.

It's not just a one-off. But the people are doing it again and again and again. Every decision that they're making, every direction they're turning, it's all going away from God again and again and again.

And you see it in verse 15. It's their own wisdom. It says there, because you have said. They are making all their own decisions, using their own wisdom.

[ 15 : 35 ] Instead of listening to what the Lord is saying, they're listening to themselves. And where do they end up? They end up, we have made a covenant with death.

death. This is the way that we are going. And does it not speak into our situation today? This is the way that we are going.

This is the direction we are choosing to turn in our own wisdom. We will take all these matters of life and death into our own hands.

And where does it lead us? To find refuge in lies. To find shelter in falsehood.

And there is hope in any of these things is foolishness. It's like we read of in Matthew, or Jesus preaches in Matthew chapter 7, the wise and the foolish builder.

[ 16 : 39 ] The Lord is saying here in Isaiah 28, hear the word of the Lord. Listen, but they don't. And so what is the outcome? The same as it would be in Matthew 7.

Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against the house and it fell and great was the fall of it.

There is the outcome of this wisdom. It's foolishness. Foolishness. It's foolishness. To go on listening to our own wisdom is foolishness.

To go on in the direction that we are going rejecting God, it is foolishness and there will be a great destruction. The Lord is being rejected.

Isaiah 53, verse 3, he speaks, we've looked at it recently, he's despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Again, speaking about the Lord Jesus.

[ 17 : 48 ] In John, chapter 1, verse 10, he was in the world and the world was made through him yet the world did not know him. He came to his own and his own people did not receive him.

He was rejected. rejected. The cornerstone of Psalm 118, rejected. And so it asks ourselves this evening, what are we doing with this cornerstone?

What are we doing with Jesus? As you look at yourself, as you examine yourself, are you rejecting him again? Are you making lies your refuge?

Are you making falsehood your shelter? Are you rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ? Instead of looking at him, we're looking to ourselves.

We'll go back to Robert Murray McShane's quote when he said, for every look at you, take it yourself, take ten looks at Christ. He went on to say this, let your soul be filled with heart ravishing sense of the sweetness and excellency of Christ and all that is in him.

[ 18 : 59 ] Let the Holy Spirit fill every chamber of your heart and so there will be no room for folly or the world or Satan or the flesh. By rejecting Jesus, we are making room for folly, the world, Satan and the flesh.

And so McShane was saying, look to him. Look to him that the Spirit of God might fill every chamber of your heart. So as you examine your heart this evening, what is in there?

Is it yourself or is it Christ? Somebody commenting on what McShane commented there was saying this, here is the punchline to the entire thought.

The excellency of Christ is both the brilliant contrast to the sin in our hearts and the remedy to the sin we find there.

the brilliant contrast to the sin in our hearts is the excellency of Christ. So as we look at our hearts and we see the sin in our hearts, we see the excellency of Christ and we see there the remedy for the sin that we find in it.

[ 20 : 22 ] So it's not about rejecting Christ. Christ. It's about receiving him, trusting him. The fool says in his heart, there is no God.

So don't be foolish this evening. Well the second thing we see as we move on here is we see the grounded stone. We see the foundation of this stone.

What happened to the stone that was rejected in Psalm 118? It became the cornerstone. It became that foundation to everything.

And there we are reminded of Christ. He was rejected by many and yet all the time he was being made that sure foundation of our faith.

And the psalmist says this is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes. is it marvelous in your eyes this evening that you can look to Christ and see the excellency of Christ and know that Christ is the one who is able to fill your heart and find refuge in him.

[ 21 : 39 ] I say I may have been writing 700 years before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ yet you see here Christ in verse 16 behold I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion a stone a tested stone a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation.

We see it here the cornerstone is Christ. Jesus himself when he was standing before the scribes and the Pharisees he quoted Psalm 118 in Matthew 21 verse 42 he says the stone the builders reject has become the cornerstone but they couldn't see it they were rejecting him and here was the Lord that stone before them and here we have the Lord before us this evening and are we rejecting him as well?

We would be foolish. Peter and Paul in the New Testament they use this verse as well in 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 6 Peter says here 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 you see he adds that believes in him the stone is Christ and so why was Jesus quoting Psalm 118 why was Peter and Paul why would they both quote this verse from Isaiah to encourage a people in their faith to bring them to see their need of Christ that this stone is what they need for their salvation that's what's spelled out for us in verse 16 and it uses these different phrases as laid a foundation in Zion a stone a tested stone a precious cornerstone and saying so much to us there saying so much that the people would recognize when people were building in those days there would be a substantial stone that was set in the ground on which everything else was built so there was no mistaking what God was saying the stone was required for building on and the Lord is saying here

I have set this stone a tested stone a precious cornerstone and that is what he is building his church on so that even as the world is shaken as the world is rocked as even maybe at times when our faith is rocked we have this precious cornerstone it is the foundation on which everything is built we are not building on our own wisdom we are building on the wisdom of God who has given us this stone God is building his church and he is building it on the rock that is Jesus Christ I was watching a building program this last week and somebody had bought a plot of land and they wanted to build a house on it and they knew the ground wasn't the best but they didn't realise just how bad it was when they started clearing the ground you could see this digger just digging in and underneath the top layer of soil they had clay and the clay was just going down and down and down it was just seemed to be never ending and they were so amazed at the depth and it caused them panic because they realised we can't build here we've got to hit rock now the builder could easily have said well we've gone down far enough we'll just build on this clay they don't really need to know but he couldn't because he knew that very soon if they did that the building was going to start to give way it didn't have a sure foundation and when you look at the people in Isaiah's day here their foundation was very much on clay their wisdom was in the lies that they were taking refuge in and falsehood they had taken shelter so what was going to happen it's all going to come crumbling down and the wisdom of this world is just like that it's being built on a foundation that is weak and it's going to come crumbling down but the

Lord didn't spare anything when he laid this foundation a very different foundation this stone the foundation stone in Zion a stone a tested stone he spared nothing he gave his son that he might give his life for his people that Jesus would be the foundation of our faith Gordon was mentioning this morning of our righteousness when our righteousness is in ourselves it's got no foundation Paul was saying there in Philippians he had all of these things he could claim as his own foundation his own righteousness but it was nothing it was rubbish compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord tested stone a precious stone the stone that the builders would use would be an expensive stone it would be a costly stone because it needed to be secure it needed to be right for the foundation and God did not spare anything the cost was paid in full what are we relying on our falsehood our lies or the stone that is

[ 28 : 25 ] Jesus Christ probably the young people here just now tonight but did you get any school reports in the last few weeks when you come to the end of term or maybe you're waiting for results of exams it can be a bit of an anxious time there was once a school boy brought home his school report and it had very poor grades he didn't do very well at all and he gave it to his father his father read it and he said to him what do you have to say about this you haven't done well and the wee boy replied well there's one thing dad for sure you can be proud of me I didn't cheat finding a positive in the midst of everything else that was negative when we stand before God and he looks at us and we failed in so many things what are we going to say to him all we can do is be honest and if we're saying it is not in my righteousness we are saying

I haven't tried to cheat I haven't tried to do things by myself I haven't tried to do things in my own way I haven't been the one who has made lies my refuge or taken shelter in falsehood I haven't done any of these things Lord from the depths I cried to you like the psalmist says because that is all we can do all we can do is look and see the precious cornerstone that is Jesus Christ to try and do anything else is cheating we're cheating God we're making him out to be a liar we're making out his word to be false if we can say we'll go by ourselves and our own wisdom he is calling us to put our trust in him as we read in John those few verses in verse 10 where the people rejected the

Lord it goes on to say in verse 12 and 13 but to all who did receive and who believed in his name he gave the right to become the children of God that is what we are through faith through believing in him through trusting in him and the stone that he has given the Christ that he has given are are we listening to his word that is the question and as we close it's a question I want to put to you are you listening to what the Lord is saying are you examining yourself in the light of his word to us where there are two places we can take refuge in the lies of this world or in the rock the cornerstone that is Jesus Christ I said before whoever believes will not be in haste it means they will find their calm their peace in the

Lord Jesus Christ Christ is a living stone it means that we can look to him who died for our sins who was raised from the dead and who was triumphant over sin it is the stone that his church is being built upon what is our vision of the Lord Jesus do we see the excellency of Christ as we look to him look at yourself once but look to Christ ten times and what do you see in this world when we look into ourselves we feel a sense of worry anxious about everything that's going on around us but when we look to Christ we see the one on whom the church is being built a church that is secure not just for today but for all eternity

New York today is a huge city population of over 8 million people and it covers a vast area but when people first came to New York as it is now it was initially called New Amsterdam by a Dutch colony and they set up their own colony there and they only went so far into Manhattan as it is now and there they built a wall because they thought that's as far as we're going to go it'll keep us safe in our place and it'll protect us from those the Native Americans and others who might come and if you know you New York today there's a street called Wall Street and that's where this original wall was built and the name stuck but if you look on a map now you find

[ 34 : 16 ] Wall Street beyond it is a mass of streets the people only thought they would go so far and populate a small area but now it's stretching beyond what the eye can see with over 8 million people living in New York and its surrounding areas the people who first landed there they thought this will be us but as it's gone on it's exceeded what anybody could see well when you look at the church in the days of Jesus when you go to the book of Acts and you find a small number what you find is Jesus speaking to them and saying you're going to be my witnesses here in Jerusalem going out to Judea and going to all the ends of the earth the church we were being told then is going to grow and the church is still growing today because the foundation is

Jesus Christ and his church is being built until he comes so whatever else is torn down in our world whatever else shakes our world today and our world is being shaken it's being shaken by the lies that people take refuge in it's been shaken by the falsehood that people find hope in by rejecting God don't be foolish tonight God is speaking to us he is building his church its foundation is Jesus Christ a precious cornerstone who gave himself for his church are you taking refuge in the lies of this world are you examining yourself under the word of

Lord our gracious God we thank you that in the world that's full of lies and falsehoods that we do have one who is truth and who is described as we have read as that precious cornerstone that sure foundation and help us this evening that we might find our refuge in him so we might be safe and secure in a world full of trouble that we would see that our eternity and our eternal life is secure through faith in him Lord hear us we pray and forgive us our sins as we ask all in his precious name Amen we'll conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 96 in the Scottish Psalter Psalm 96 we're going to sing from verse 10 down to the end of the psalm to God's praise among the heathens say

[ 40 : 59 ] Lord because he comes to judge the earth comes he he he he he he he he he he  
he he he he he he benediction i'll go to the main door and close with the benediction  
now may grace mercy and peace from god father son and holy spirit rest and abide with  
you all now and forevermore amen i i i i i i i i i i