

1 Peter 2:4-8 | “The Stone That Changes Everything”

Pastor Matt Brown

We are continuing our study through 1 Peter, as we are now progressing through chapter 2. Peter has talked a lot about our individual blessings and growth as Christians, and what we should be striving for in our lives. Now he is moving into more of a corporate emphasis, as he’s going to talk about the church and the blessings that come from being founded on Christ.

Have you ever come upon something that changed everything for you? What about something that changed everything in the world?

A couple things that first come to my mind are some technological advances. You would be hard-pressed to find someone who disagreed with the fact that the internet has changed everything. It has changed how we interact with others, how we do business, how we live our lives, etc. It has changed everything. Now for better or worse, I won’t go there this morning, but it has changed the world.

I also think of the car and the airplane. The introduction of those two things has changed everything when it comes to travel. Now we jump in our cars and go places near and far. Now we hop on a plane and go across the country in hours. Before, it took so long to just travel somewhere else, and the mail took longer to get places as well. Cars and planes have made a huge difference in our lives.

Although the internet, cars, and planes have changed a vast amount of things in our lives, I would like to propose this morning something, rather *Someone*, who has changed everything to a far greater degree than all of those things combined.

You see, this person has changed everything because everything revolves around the acceptance or rejection of Him. His name is Jesus, and he has changed everything because the church itself is built on Him, and because every person’s eternity hinges on how they respond to Him. When you look closely at this passage, you can see that not only does our text revolve around Jesus, but even our very lives revolve around him.

This passage teaches us that: **Jesus is the chosen and precious Cornerstone.**

Especially in ancient building projects, the cornerstone was the most important stone in the whole building. It was the stone laid at the corner of the foundation, and was laid first. The cornerstone was critical because it was used as one of the most important foundation stones, and therefore, it provided stability and strength to the building. But also, it became the standard by which other stones were laid. So it had to be level and straight in order to provide a guide for the angles of the other stones. Every stone that came after it was placed in alignment with it. So that’s what Jesus is: the cornerstone.

But he's not just the cornerstone, for he's also called "a living stone". Now isn't that an oxymoron? A *living* stone. Usually a stone is dead, but Peter is purposeful in his words here. He calls him a living stone because he's speaking of a person, but much more than that, he's a living stone because he lives forevermore. He died, but he conquered death. Christ is not some inert stone, but he is the living and reigning Lord of all by means of his resurrection.

We also find that Jesus, the living stone and cornerstone, was laid by God. Look there at verse 6 as Peter quotes an Old Testament passage, "Behold, *I am laying* in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious..." This reminds us that Jesus' ministry in becoming the cornerstone was initiated by God the Father. God the Father was behind it all. He determined to send Christ and save many through Him. Our salvation rests in the fact that God initiated things, for without his initiative, we would be dead in our sins. And so God had to be the one who laid the cornerstone for us - it's his building project. He is the master builder, in fact, he's the very architect of the church.

Although Jesus was rejected by men, he's chosen and precious in the sight of God.

As we go through life, we have to evaluate whether something is precious or worthless. I think of those shows like, "Antiques Roadshow," where people bring in these antiques and professionals evaluate how much they are worth. Is it a fake and not worth anything, or is it the real deal and precious? Well let's say that there was a new appraiser and someone brought this extremely valuable item to them to assess. Let's say that the appraiser thought it was worthless, but they were wrong, for it was worth millions of dollars. Did the appraiser's wrong assessment change the value of that item? Of course not, it's still worth millions of dollars. So although that faulty appraisal was wrong, it didn't change the preciousness of the antique.

That's sort of what happened with Jesus. When he came to earth, many people rejected him, most notably the religious leaders of the day. But did their rejection change his value? Not in the slightest. They may have rejected him, but they were dead wrong, for he's still chosen and precious in the sight of the Father. In God's eyes, Jesus is precious because He is His Son, and also, he accomplished His will to perfection in his life, death, and resurrection. But also, he's chosen, for he was selected to be the One through whom salvation alone would come.

When you think of the cornerstone, since it was the most important stone in the whole building and everything was based on it, then it was *precious* and *chosen specifically*. What I mean by that is that since the cornerstone had such an important role in the building, it was precious to the builders and it was chosen with great thought. So that's how God the Father views Jesus. He is the chosen and precious cornerstone, who would be the foundation stone of all those who would believe.

Christian, we have a precious Christ! Even though he was and is rejected by people left and right, their rejection doesn't change his worth! Popularity and the world's approval doesn't determine what is true, but rather God's truth determines what is true. What truly matters is what

God says and how he views things. So we must never let the world's rejection of something impact our view of it, for they rejected even Jesus!

This is what we must always keep in mind, whether it comes to Jesus, but also to God's Word. What matters is how God views something, not how man views it. Their rejection of Christ shouldn't change your view of Him, for God sees him as precious. Their rejection of His Word shouldn't change your view of the Scriptures, for they come from God Himself and are His precious Words to us.

Verse 7 actually tells us what happened...“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” If you think about it, that's a very brief summary of the Gospel! The stone came, but the people rejected him by putting him to death, showing not only Jesus' death, but also their sinfulness. Yet that wasn't the end, for he became the cornerstone, for he rose from the dead. The people's rejection led Christ to become the cornerstone of the church. His rejection became the very means by which God brought us life. His death and rejection wasn't the end of the story, but he was raised victoriously and became the chief foundation stone of the church and the way to be saved.

Jesus is the chosen and precious Cornerstone. Though he was rejected by men, he is chosen and precious in God's sight, and God laid him down as the cornerstone for all who would believe. And that leads me to the first point under our main point...

1. Those who believe in Him are built on the Cornerstone.

Since Jesus is the chosen and precious Cornerstone, so now those who believe in Him are eternally blessed. If you look throughout this passage, you can see that a lot is spoken about concerning those who are built on Christ, the Cornerstone.

Something that we see is how people must respond to Jesus to be built on him. First, they must believe in him. We see in the quotation in verse 6 that “whoever *believes in him* will not be put to shame.” And in verse 7 it states that “the honor is for you *who believe...*” In order to be built upon Christ, you must believe in Him. Either you reject the cornerstone in unbelief, or are built upon the cornerstone in belief. Have you believed in Jesus Christ? Have you trusted in what He has done on your behalf in his death and resurrection?

We also see that those who are built on Christ come to him. Look there at verse 4, “As you come to him...” All those who are built on Christ go to him in belief, trust, and fellowship. They have a personal relationship with Christ, and so they are constantly going to Him. They approach him and draw near to Him because they have recognized his preciousness and desire to get to know him more. They long for Him more, for they have tasted that He is good, as we just learned last week.

Is this your approach when it comes to Christ? Are you going to Him daily? Or are you neglecting Him and looking inward or other places? Do you realize how great he is, and how greatly needed He is for your life? Go to Him! He is a loving and gracious Savior!

So those built on Christ believe in him and come to him, but what do they become? Living stones. You see, Christ is the Living Stone who makes us living stones. He is our reason for being and living. He gives us life and changes us to become more like Him. But the question arises: why are we living stones? Because we, as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house. As we continue in fellowship with Christ, we are being built up into God's spiritual house.

Think of a building made of stones. Christ is the cornerstone laid first, and each Christian is a living stone that's a part of the building. And as more and more people believe in him, more stones are added to the building, so that it's growing into this amazing spiritual house of God. Therefore, the church, which is made up of Christians, is actually a spiritual temple of God. That means we don't come *to* God's house, we *are* God's house!

This should be a comforting truth to remember: the church is alive, not dead, for it's made up of living stones and it's continually being added to. But also, it's comforting to know that the church is God's house, not a man-made institution. Man-made institutions flop and fail, but the church of God will not fizzle away. Man-made institutions can die off, but the church of God will never die off.

Christ is our foundation, and through Christ, he has brought us together to be something special. We are each a part of God's great building program! We are constantly growing and becoming something precious to God. We are a part of something bigger than ourselves!

Oh, that each Christian would remember this. We are not to be lone wolf Christians, trying to live our faith by ourselves without the church, but you were made into a living stone that's made to be a part of something bigger. Like stones in a building, we need each other or the building isn't what it's supposed to be. We are intricately linked so that it becomes a building. So one stone can't say, "I'm out of here!" or "I don't need you guys!" But each stone must understand that it is and should be a part of the church. That means we are to be unified, working together, encouraging one another, loving one another, and realizing that we are all in this together. In fact, we were *made* to be together.

I regularly see Christians say that they love Christ, but not so much the church. And I'm thinking, "How is that possible?! Christ is the cornerstone of the church! And if you are truly a Christian, you are a part of the spiritual house of God." That mindset is exactly like that stone saying, "I don't like being a part of this building." But God is saying, "No, you are a living stone meant to be with other living stones as I'm building something amazing." So whenever I think of that person saying they don't like the church, I'm thinking, "Get yourself back in line with the cornerstone. Join us in being the spiritual house of God, where you belong and where God made you to be." So join a local church, and get involved, for Christ has saved you not to live on your

own, but saved you and has made you a part of His people. In our American mindsets, we think so individualistically. But look all throughout the Bible and you see followers of God *in community*.

Christ is our Cornerstone and that means everything ought to be in line with Him. So practically, this means that whatever we do as church, we always remember who our Cornerstone is. We don't function as a church apart from Christ, but we function with Christ as our Cornerstone.

Think of a bunch of stones in a building saying, "We don't need that cornerstone, we can go and do our own thing." That would not go over well, as whatever they tried to produce would fail. So as a church, we rely upon Christ, our Cornerstone. He is our leader. He is our guide. He is our foundation. He is our stability and strength. So we preach Christ crucified. We proclaim the marvelous person and work of our Savior. We live like Him. We extol his glory.

A Christless church is not a church because their cornerstone isn't Christ. Whatever we do as a church, Christ had better be our Cornerstone.

Now as Peter moves on, he calls us not only a spiritual house, but also a holy priesthood. This is one of the main passages of Scripture that we get the truth of the priesthood of every believer. This means that we don't need a priest or a pope to intercede for us with God, but we can draw near to Him through Christ. Through Christ's death and resurrection, he has made each Christian a priest, who can now go to God in prayer and can also offer sacrifices.

Now these aren't physical sacrifices, but as the text says, they are "spiritual sacrifices." These are also not sin or guilt sacrifices, for Christ was the once-for-all sacrifice for sin, but these are simply sacrifices of thankfulness and praise.

This is our task and vocation as Christians - we are priests continually offering spiritual sacrifices to God. This is what you think of as a life devoted to God, and a life that is constantly worshipping Him. This is sacrificially living for the Lord, and these sacrifices are a myriad of things.

In Philippians, Paul talks about gifts that they sent him as a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.¹ In Hebrews, the author calls us to offer up a sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. And he goes on to say generally that they are not neglect to do good and share what they have, for those sacrifices are pleasing to God.² Romans 12:1 tells us to present our whole bodies as living sacrifices. So these sacrifices encompass numerous things, but they are foundationally lives given over the Lord, and doing good works for Him and for others.

These sacrifices are to be acceptable to God and are given to God through Christ. It's really all because of Him that our sacrifices can be pleasing to the Father. So we don't boast in our

¹ Philippians 4:18.

² Hebrews 13:15-16.

sacrifices, but we boast in the Lord, who has enabled and empowered us to be priests and to offer acceptable spiritual sacrifices to our God.

Christian, you are a part of the holy priesthood of God. You are meant to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Him, but have you been doing that? Or have you been living for yourself? God has saved you, and made you a living stone a part of His spiritual house being built up. And he has saved you and made you a part of a holy priesthood, who is to be offering up spiritual sacrifices to the Lord. But do you remember these truths and do live like they were true?

So we are built into a spiritual house of God upon Christ the Cornerstone, but what results from trusting the Cornerstone? Since we are connected to and built upon the Cornerstone, then there are amazing benefits that come from that union. First, we receive life from him. He is the Living Stone and we become living stones because of the life he gives to us. This is eternal life, but that's not all!

We also find purpose and meaning being built on Christ. As we just saw, God is building us as individuals into something greater than ourselves. We are a part of his great building project, and when God is done adding living stones to his house, the construction will be complete, the tools removed, and the whole world will get to see the finished building in all its splendor, and all glory will go to God alone! Christian, you are a part of something bigger than just yourself. You are a part of God's grand plan that will be amazing.

We receive life and meaning, but also honor. At the end of verse 6 and going into verse 7, it says that "whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. So the honor is for you who believe..."

This is telling us that putting your trust in Jesus is not something wasted, regrettable, or humiliating. Christ is the stone that never disappoints. We will someday be vindicated and won't experience the shame of judgment, but the honor of approval from God. All because of the precious Cornerstone who we believed in. Your faith will not be found to be in vain, and you *will not* be put to shame because you have placed your faith in the most sure and solid foundation that there could ever be.

Christian, don't give up or give in! Christian, don't feel like it's all a waste, for you will never, no not ever, be let down and ashamed of believing in Jesus Christ. Though others may try to make you feel ashamed for trusting in Jesus, remember that you will never be put to shame in the end. He isn't some fake, who will disappoint you in the end. He isn't some fraud, who will make you feel humiliated for ever believing in Him. But he's worth it. He's worth every moment of trust. He's worth everything!

Those who believe in the Cornerstone are built on him and blessed, but what happens to those who don't believe in Him?...

2. Those who disbelieve in Him stumble over the Cornerstone.

Since Jesus is the chosen and precious Cornerstone laid by the Father, then rejecting Him is a big deal. Why is it such a big deal? Well think of it this way: you are rejecting the very foundation that God has laid for eternal life. You are rejecting the very foundation that God has laid for the church. You are rejecting the very foundation of God's good and grand plan for the world. The Father has chosen and determined that Jesus would be the cornerstone for his work in the world, and therefore, you can't just cast his cornerstone aside. For by rejecting his cornerstone, you are rejecting God Himself.

That's the actual response that many people have to Christ: rejection. You see, the world is not neutral, for it all revolves around what they do with Jesus. Even John 3 explains that those who believe are not condemned, but those who don't believe are condemned already. It explains that either you come to the light or you hate the light.³

Christ is the "Great Dividing Line." Those who believe in Him are on one side, while those who don't believe in Him are on the other. Everyone's eternity hinges on what they do with Jesus. Do they obey and believe in Him or do they disobey and not believe in Him?

Our text actually connects disobedience to the word with rejection and stumbling. Verse 8 says, "They stumble *because* they disobey the word..." The Gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ, and it is the Word spoken of here. The Word tells us all about our situation being sinners in need of saving, and it tells us all about our Savior and what He has done to provide the way to be saved. So when you disobey and disregard that Word, then you are rejecting Christ. You are rejecting the only way to be saved, and therefore you stumble *because* you disobey the word.

Each person is held responsible for this response of disobedience. Their stumbling wasn't accidental, but intentional.

So we certainly know what rejection of Christ is and what disobedience to the word is, but what does "stumbling" mean? 'Stumbling' here is using the imagery of stumbling over a rock to picture someone stumbling over Christ and falling to eternal ruin. To reject Christ is to stumble because you are neglecting the true purpose of the stone and disregarding it. To reject Christ is to stumble because by rejecting him you are causing your life to go to ruin. Without Christ, there is no life. Without Christ, there is only the solemn state of being under condemnation.

You need to understand that disobeying the word and rejecting Christ isn't *just* the antagonistic atheist that we typically think of, but it's also every person who does not repent and turn in faith to Jesus Christ. There are millions of people on their way to hell, who may seem like good people, but who have rejected Christ by not turning in faith to Him. And that is a serious thing. They may not be as antagonistic to Jesus as the Pharisees, but they are still in their sins.

Anyone who tries to live their life apart from Christ is under condemnation. So it's not always the person who verbally says, "I hate Christ!", but it's also the person who says, "I don't need

³ John 3:16-21.

Christ,” who is bound for eternal separation from God. They may not verbally say they hate Christ, but by rejecting the Gospel, they are displaying that they hate the Light.

You also can't reject Christ and think that you are building something for God. This could be all those religions who think they are following God, but which are *Christless* religions. They may think they are getting closer to God, but they are far from Him. The religious leaders thought they were building something for God, but they rejected the very Cornerstone that God gave them to build upon! What are you building your life upon? The rock or the sand? Have you responded in faith in Jesus or have you rejected him by not responding in faith?

A commentator named Goppelt put it well when he said this, “Christ is laid across the path of humanity on its course into the future. In the encounter with him each person is changed: one for salvation, another for destruction...One cannot simply step over Jesus to go on about the daily routine and pass him by to build a future. Whoever encounters him is inescapably changed through the encounter: Either one sees and becomes “a living stone,” or one stumbles as a blind person over Christ and comes to ruin.”⁴

The very way of salvation is stumbled over by many, isn't that so sad? The rock that they could build upon is stumbled over instead. Why? Because they rejected him and were offended by the offense of the Cross. This is the sad, but true reality of life - to reject Christ is to land yourself in eternal ruin.

And then Peter ends his statement by saying something interesting, “as they were destined to do.” We don't have time to talk deeply about this, but it is simply showing us their rejection was prophesied, but also appointed by God. Their rejection of Christ wasn't surprising to the Father, but He promised it in the Old Testament and they were destined to do this.

This is not meant to give a full orbbed theology here, but simply to encourage Christians because it reminds us that God was not surprised by this rejection. Their rejection doesn't negate Christianity, or throw a wrench in what God is doing. Peter is saying, “This rejection doesn't cause a problem, but actually *proves* that Jesus is truly the Christ.” Nothing is out of God's control, and their bad response didn't alter anything, for the rejected stone became the cornerstone.

Isn't this encouraging! Human unbelief does not frustrate God's purposes! So we must remember that even now people's rejection of Jesus doesn't disprove the reality of Christ, but proves it. God promised that this would happen, and his divine purposes are fulfilled in them, all the while, the guilt and punishment rests on their shoulders. So don't give up sharing the Gospel, even though people don't believe. Don't give up on Christ, even though the world hates him. But God said this would happen, and we can take joy in the fact that God wins, no matter what. And we can take joy in the fact that although there are many who won't believe, there are many

⁴ Goppelt, Leonhard. [A Commentary on 1 Peter](#). 1993, pages 144, 146.

others who *will*. So we share the Gospel with all, pleading for them to trust in the only way to find forgiveness and life.

The world thought they won when they put Christ to death, but who got the final word? God. So also, the world may seem like it's winning right now and prevailing, but God always has the last word. So we rest in his promises and purposes, and we rest upon our great Cornerstone, Christ.

Either you are built on Christ, or you stumble over Him.

Imagine someone laid a big cornerstone in a field to start a building. It was a perfect and precious cornerstone to build a building. The first person who comes upon the cornerstone actually stumbles over the stone and says, "Get rid of this thing! It's useless and in the way. Why is it even here?" But a second person comes upon the same cornerstone and sees how perfect and precious it is. They see how it's a cornerstone and made to be a cornerstone for an amazing building. And they say, "This is amazing! This is what is needed in our world! I will build upon this stone!" That's the difference in how people respond to Christ. Either you are built upon Christ, or you stumble over Him.

Christ is the only way to be saved. The difference between belief and unbelief, between life and death, is how you view and respond to Christ.

In the illustration that I just gave, did you notice the difference in *why* the two people responded so differently to the cornerstone? One recognized the value of it, and the other regarded it as worthless. So also, that's what it is for us with Christ. Either God opens up our eyes to see the glory of Jesus and we respond in faith, or we cast him aside as worthless and trust in something else. Is Christ precious to you? Do you trust in Him or yourself?

I like the passage that Peter quoted from in one of his Old Testament citations. He quoted from Psalm 118:22 and just listen to it and the next two verses that follow it, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Isn't that so true? It is the Lord's doing and it's marvelous in our eyes. That Jesus would be rejected and die for our sins, yet he rose again and became the cornerstone. *That* is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!