

1 Peter 2:4-8
It Is All About Christ
January 24th, 2016

Intro

As most of you know, I was in Northern BC a week or so ago preaching a series of messages on Christ and the Old Testament. Throughout those messages one of my goals was to promote the reading and studying of the Old Testament. In those series of messages there were at least three reasons I provided for why I believe we must not neglect the Old Testament. The first was simply that if we ignore the Old Testament we are ignoring 2/3rds of the Bible, 39 out of 66 books of the Bible that are

"breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16).

The second reason we must not neglect the Old Testament is because it was the Bible of Peter, John, Paul ... and Jesus (**Matt 4:4**). The final reason I provided for reading, studying, teaching and preaching the Old Testament is because it is all about Jesus Christ, a fact attested to by the Lord Himself on the road to Emmaus (**Luke 24:25-27**). But not only is the Old Testament all about Christ, of course so is the New Testament. So then the whole of the Bible is all about Christ. Which means that the gospel is all about Christ. And worship then is all about Christ. And the church is all about Christ. And what you think, say and do should be all about Christ. Ultimately everything in the life of a Christian is all about Christ, a truth found among other places in God's Word, in our text for today. For as we come to 1 Peter and the 4th verse we find that (1) We come to Christ; (2) We worship through Christ; and (3) We believe on Christ. So with that in mind, let us look to the Word of God where this morning we will be reminded that it is all about Christ.

Text: 1 Peter 2:4-8

1. You Come to Christ

a. Jesus Is THE Living Stone

Peter has just explained for us what it looks like to live the Christian life, and he did it by using a few metaphors in the process. So, if you were

here a few weeks ago you remember that he started chapter 2 with a metaphor from the closet as he compared articles of clothing to sins that we need to remove and rid ourselves of **(2:1)**. Then he moved from the closet to the crib and compared the craving of an infant for milk to how a Christian ought to crave the Word of God for spiritual nourishment and growth **(2:2)**. Finally, Peter moved from the crib to the pantry comparing the taste of delicious food to the experience of the grace and goodness of God **(2:3)**. Now as we get into this next section of the chapter Peter moves from the indoors to the outdoors for his metaphors, and while he notes that we come to Christ, and we do of course, that fact seems less important to Peter than what he has to say about the Christ that we come to. I actually struggled over how to structure this sermon, for in it we definitely find three things about how we interact with Christ, but it seems as though the central focus of these verses is Christ. That being said, let's get to the metaphor that on at least one occasion Jesus confirmed applied to Him (see **Matt 21:33-43**), namely that He is the "living stone." Now I am no petrologist, but I am pretty sure that stones are not alive. If you were around 40 year ago, and maybe even if you weren't, you have probably heard of the pet rock fad. The year was 1975 and his name was Gary Dahl and he was tired of hearing his friends complain about how much work it took to take care of their cats and dogs. Then a million-dollar idea hit Gary, the pet rock.¹ You would not need to feed it, bathe it, groom it, walk it, or take it to the vet when it got sick ... because it never got sick. It was a rock and rocks are inanimate objects, which is to say, they are not alive. But Peter calls Jesus a living stone. We will see why he compares Jesus to a stone in a minute, but why does he call him a living stone if stones are generally dead? And there it is: Jesus, after living a perfect life, being "*rejected by men*," specifically His own **(John 1:11)** was crucified by the Romans, and His dead body was laid in a tomb. And you know what, most people expected that to be Jesus' final resting place. But it wasn't because Jesus is a LIVING stone. THOMAS SCHREINER picks up on this point helpfully in his commentary when he writes:

"Jesus is doubtless called the 'living' stone because of his resurrection."²

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pet_Rock

² Schreiner, Thomas R. *1, 2 Peter, Jude*. Vol. 37. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003.

The Jews may have thought they could bring an end to this One who made them look bad around every turn, but they couldn't. The Romans may have thought they could put Him down, and they may have knocked Him down, but they couldn't keep Him down.

b. We Come To Christ

And there is one reason and one reason alone that that was the case, and it was that though Jesus was rejected by men, He was *"in the sight of God chosen and precious."* Jesus was chosen by the Father to redeem all those who would repent of their sins and trust in Him which is why Isaiah could say of Him:

"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put My spirit upon Him; he will bring forth justice to the nations"

(Isaiah 42:1).

Jesus is the living stone that we come to, but do not forget all of chapter one in which Peter makes clear that there is only one reason why we come to Christ the living stone, and it is because God has saved us (**1 Peter 1:10-12, 18-19**), has caused us to be born again (**1 Peter 1:3, 22-23**), and thus has enabled and empowered us to come. We come to Christ when we are first converted and trust in Him alone, but notice how Peter puts it, *"AS you come to him,"* which is to say that we do not just come once, receive our salvation and that does it. No, we come once, then we come again and again and again. We never cease coming to the Lord Jesus Christ. We come to Christ for instructions day by day as our "Lord" (**Rom 10:9**) and "master" (**Matt 25:14-30**). We come to Christ moment by moment for strength and grace and mercy, as He is *"a very present help in trouble"* (**Psalms 46:1**). And when our bodies are resurrected and the Lord recreates and renews the Heaven and Earth we will come to Christ, and see Him face to face (**Rev 22:4**), and be present with Him for all eternity. But never, no never, forget that we come to Jesus as living stones because He is THE living stone.

2. You Worship Through Christ

A. We Are Living Stones

But when we come to Christ we come for a reason, namely, to worship Him. The reason we worship Him, or even are able to worship Him, is because while Jesus is a living stone, we are *"like living stones."* Again, we

are to understand living stones in connection with something that is dead that has come to life, which of course applies nicely to God's people. Some of you surely remember how Paul makes the connection between Jesus' resurrection and ours in Romans 6. Let me remind you though for Peter clearly intends for us to bring to mind this important connection:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. [...] For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. [...] So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:3-6, 8, 11).

All that is to say, as only Paul can say it, that because Jesus is not dead but has been resurrected, we will not stay dead once we die, but we will be resurrected. In his own way, Peter similarly, after saying that Jesus is the living stone, says we are like living stones, as while we will one day die and raise from the grave, the reality is that we are already alive eternally, which is to say that spiritually we will never die. In other words, what Peter is saying is that we do not need to wait for the gift of eternal life (see **John 3:16**), if we have repented of our sins and trusted in Christ we already are alive eternally. Yes, our bodies will die and be put in the ground, but at that point our spirits will go to be with the Lord (**Phil 1:21-23; 2 Cor 5:8**) until that day when they are reunited with our resurrected bodies (**1 Cor 15; 1 Thess 4:16-18**). But what is happening with all those living stones (i.e. Christians) until then? Well, as Peter puts it, we are "*being built up as a spiritual house.*" Not so many years ago, maybe a few decades, it dawned on a good percentage of evangelical Christianity that we had become too attached and too focused on our buildings. This sparked two trends, one was house churches, and another was churches that rented space, either in a school or in some other church that worships on a different day. I remember speaking with some pastors who got involved in one or the other of these two trends, which were not at all bad in and of themselves, but I remember that many of these pastors

sort of wore it as a badge on their shoulders that they did not have a church building, after all, in their minds church buildings were altogether bad. Well, I never got involved in one of those two trends, as I see the value in having a building, and one reason I see the value in that is that Peter used the metaphor of a building to describe the church. He says we, that is, each member of the church, are stones in a building and the Lord is in the process of putting the stones together to make a church. So yes, we must realize that the building is not the church, but here what we find out is that the church is like a building. Paul uses this same metaphor, as was noted by Jake a few weeks ago, but Paul includes a few more details than Peter when he writes:

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (Eph 2:19-22).

So, while Paul focuses on the building, Peter focuses on the individual stones that make up the building. But when we put them together we see that Jesus is putting the stones together to be a temple, which is to say a place where the Holy Spirit dwells (**1 Cor 3:16-17**). And we should notice, the word Peter uses for stone is not the word to be used for a loose stone such as you might find in the parking lot of the church; instead, the word he used for stone is that of a prepared stone, one which is to be used in a building.³ This is one reason why being a member of a local church is not an option, as when we come to Jesus for salvation we are added to His household, which is to say the great household of God, all Christians. Because we are added to the great household of God, sometimes called the universal church, we then join together with a local church. It is our connection then with a local church that demonstrates our membership in the universal church of God. In other words, we demonstrate that we are like living stones when we are connected to the community of Christ, the church.

³ Hiebert, D. Edmond. *First Peter: An Expository Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. p. 110

b. We Worship Christ

But moving on in our text, we find that we are not only like living stones, for the apostle mixes his metaphors and says we are being built up as a spiritual house *"to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices."* We will have more to say about the priesthood in next week's sermon when we look at verses 9-10, but for this week let's just note what we do as a holy priesthood: namely, offer sacrifices. But these sacrifices are not physical sacrifices such as bulls or goats, these are spiritual sacrifices. Such sacrifices are explained by both Paul and the author of Hebrews. Paul, in these famous verses from his letter to the Christians in Rome says:

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" **(Romans 12:1-2)**.

Here Paul notes that our very lives are to be offered as a living sacrifice to God, which he then explains means that our lives are to be used to worship God with. The author of Hebrews then says likewise:

"Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God"
(Hebrews 13:15-16).

These two passages make clear that the sacrifices that Peter says that we offer to God are a reference to the worship and praise we offer to God, whether it be at church on a Sunday morning, at work or school on Monday morning, out with friends on a Friday evening, or any other time and place. In other words, for a Christian, if you have come to Jesus, THE living stone, then you are a living stone, and your life is now to be all about worship. What that means is that everything you think, do or say is to be a testimony to the goodness and grace of God in your life. Every word you say, everywhere you go, everything you do is to be an act of worship to God, something that is no small feat of course. But fear not, for though you could never do this on your own, in your own strength, and by your own merit, Peter adds that we *"offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."* Have you thought lately about how marvelous and wonderful it is that we, sinful human beings, can

bring offerings before the God of the universe? Remember, the One we worship is “great,” says the Psalmist, “abundant in power” (**Psalm 147:5**), “righteous in all His ways and kind in all his works” (**Psalm 145:17**). As Jesus reminds us, “No one is good except God alone” (**Mark 10:18**), which is to say that He is the only one who is perfectly good, without even an ounce of evil or wickedness. Or as Isaiah heard from the mouths of angels, the God we worship is “Holy, Holy, Holy” (**Isaiah 6:3**). Yet in spite of all of this, we who are unclean, sinful, powerless, wicked and unholy ... we are able to offer worship to God that is acceptable to Him. How can this possibly be? There is one way, and one way alone, through Christ. As Jesus says it:

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (**John 14:6**).

You know, a lot of people claim to worship God, but their worship is not acceptable to God. It may sound harsh to say, but the truth is that their worship is in fact unacceptable, a putrid odor in the Lord’s nostrils, an absolute offense against Holy God. And you might think, yes, but if they mean well then it is all good, right? But it isn’t, for we discover that there is only one way to worship God acceptably because there is only one way to God. Later on in his letter Peter, surely reflecting on Jesus words’ from John 14, writes:

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit” (**1 Peter 3:18**).

I remember a song from back in the 80’s by a group called the IMPERIALS, which would no doubt be labelled politically incorrect today, even in many Christian music circles. But the chorus of this song hits what Peter says about worship right on the head. It goes like this:

No, it won't be old Buddha that's sitting on the throne
And it won't be old Mohammed that's calling us Home
And it won't be Hare Krishna that plays that trumpet tune
And we're going to see The Son not Reverend Moon!

Reverend Moon was a cult leader who claimed to be a messiah and started the unification church in the middle of the twentieth century. And he has something in common with the other three men mentioned in the song: that they are not the way to God. You cannot offer worship

acceptable to God through Buddha, Mohammed, Hare Krishna, Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell or any other religious leader. There is only one way to worship God acceptably and it is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Only Jesus was, is, and shall forever be fully God and fully man. Only Jesus lived a perfect life. Only Jesus died a sacrificial death. Only Jesus rose from the grave defeating death and hell. Only Jesus ascended to the right hand of God the Father. Only Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us to enable us to worship God. And it is only through Jesus, and because of Jesus that we can worship God and our worship be acceptable. Which brings us to our last point.

3. We Believe On Jesus

a. Jesus Is The Cornerstone

And I know we have only covered two verses so far and have three to go, but these three verses will take the least amount of time to address, for in these three verses we find primarily that either you believe in Jesus or you do not. Once again Peter returns to his initial metaphor, noting that Jesus is “*a cornerstone chosen and precious,*” yet here he reveals where he got this metaphor from in the first place, namely, the Old Testament. Specifically, Peter uses a combination of verses from a Psalm and from Isaiah the prophet. The first is from Isaiah where Jerusalem’s leaders are being rebuked and encouraged not to trust in their enemies, but instead to trust in God. Yet here, as the New Testament authors so often do, Peter helps us see that in **Isaiah 28:16** when it refers to the laying of a cornerstone, while it is a call to trust God, it is also pointing forward to Christ who of course is the precious cornerstone. The cornerstone is of course the first and most important stone in a building. If there is no cornerstone to begin building on there cannot be a building. The whole building, and the integrity of the building, and the success of the building, is dependent on the cornerstone. Jesus once told a parable about making sure that the cornerstone of your life is strong and sure. He said: “*Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock*” (**Matthew 7:24-25**).

Of course Jesus is the rock, or as Peter and Isaiah say, the cornerstone who you must build your life upon. Thus the call is simply to trust in Christ, to depend on Christ, to believe on Christ. And the good news is that if you do, the promise is “*whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.*” Paul quotes from the same passage in Romans 10, and when he does, we find out that to not be put to shame is the equivalent to being saved from sin and death (cf. **Rom 10:11 with 10:13**). In other words, it means that on judgement day if we believe on the Lord Jesus, trusting Christ alone for our salvation, then we will experience no guilt or shame, but instead will experience “*honour*” because we believe in Christ.

b. Jesus is the Stone of Offense

The next two Old Testament verses Peter references are **Psalm 118:22** and **Isaiah 8:14** where the cornerstone is not come to, not worshiped and not believed. Instead, the cornerstone is “*the stone that the builders rejected,*” and is “*A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.*” This is the choice that every man, woman, and child has to make. You see, there is no middle road, no walking the line, no halfway when it comes to what you do with Jesus. Either you submit to Him as Lord or you stumble upon Him and His demands upon your life. Either you worship Him or you worship yourself. Either you love Him or you are offended by Him and His demands upon your life. Either you repent of your sins and trust alone on Him for your salvation or you do not. Either you accept His claims and His identity or you reject Him and His claims. Either you obey His Word or you do not, as Peter concludes this little section by saying “*They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*” Once again, Peter recognizes and affirms here that God is sovereign over all things and God ordains all things, even things such as those who will disobey His Word and Stumble over His Son. Now I know this makes some people uncomfortable, but I assure you it is not meant to. In actuality Peter has included this piece of information to encourage the believers. If you will remember, Peter’s original audience were experiencing difficult times of suffering as a result of their commitment to Christ (see **1:1,6; 2:11; 3:14; 4:12, 19**). They were surrounded in their community by those who would not believe, those who rejected Christ, and those who wished harm to Christians. And Peter encourages the believers, telling them that even this is part of God’s sovereign plan. Even

the rejection of Christ, and the hatred of Christ by unbelievers was appointed or predestined by God. Now let me say a few things about this which I pray may help us come to terms with the difficult doctrine of predestination. First, the doctrine of predestination does not make God responsible for man's unbelief or disobedience (**Rom 9:14**), nor ought we to question Him about it (**Rom 9:19-20**). Second, every person is responsible for his or her own unbelief and disobedience and the punishment which is a result of such. Third, no one who comes to Christ in repentance and faith, confessing Jesus is Lord, will be refused salvation (**Matt 11:28-30; Rom 10:9**). Fourth, In regards to this text, the destining to unbelief is not necessarily final, for as WAYNE GRUDEM says about this verse:

“It ... affirms that their present rebellion and disobedience has been ordained by God, and does not indicate whether it will continue throughout life or not.”⁴

So then, what we see in this verse is in fact a beautiful example of the mysterious truth that God's sovereignty and human responsibility work together in perfect harmony. Notice the cause of their stumbling, it is what they do, namely, they disobey God's Word, but then we see that they do what they were ordained to do. I do not for a second believe that I can adequately explain how these two things work together, but on the authority of the Word of God I can tell you that they do. There can be no doubt whatsoever that God is sovereign and that man is responsible for his actions. And with that said, and as always the invitation to approach me with questions always stands, we can now move on to our conclusion.

Conclusion

So, here we are at the end of our sermon, in one respect, but it is also the beginning. This is the nature of every sermon, for it is not merely for information but it is to lead to transformation. So we have heard the Word of God, now we must apply what we have learned. So as we leave this place this morning, as we dwell upon the truths we have learned or been reminded of concerning Christ, may we—by the power of the Holy Spirit—respond to them in an appropriate manner.

⁴ Grudem, Wayne. *1 Peter: Tynedale NT Commentary*. Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1988. p. 108

Christ is the living stone, we are living stones, so let's come to Him over and over and over again. Come to Him as Saviour for hope and joy. Come to Him as Lord for direction and instruction. Come to Him in prayer, come to Him for help, come to Him for strength and grace and mercy.

Christ is the cornerstone, we are being built into His house, so worship Him when His people are gathered and when apart.

Christ is the stone of stumbling and offense, so believe on Him and call others around you to do likewise, standing firm on the truth that either you believe on the Lord Jesus and are saved or you reject Him and are damned. May God's Work through this sermon continue on through this week and until the Lord returns, even so, we pray come Lord Jesus.