

One Cornerstone, Two Uses
1 Peter 2:2-10
May 10, 2020

Stones. Last week it was seeds. Yes, I was called on the fact that seeds can last more than a year but why do they put dates on the packages? It may not be the best to keep seed around for long if you want a good stand. This week though, the Lord through Peter talks of stones. What are stones good for?

When I was growing up in Northeast Nebraska, we had stones. All sizes colors and composition. Many were granite. One of our favorites was a large black and white speckled granite bolder that was flat on top. It was sitting a few feet from a black walnut tree behind the house. It was in the shade of a big cottonwood tree so it was a nice place to get at those meats of the black walnut out from that hard covering. Yes, dad's ball peen hammer might be missing from the garage but it would probably be found on that large rock.

We had a bunch of rocks on the homestead, brought in by glaciers many years before but those glaciers must have stopped with their load in that area, for if you went to a bordering county to the southeast, you couldn't find a rock unless someone hauled it in.

We had lots of rocks and those we picked up out of the fields ended up in a long pile of rocks, collected over the years. It was a ready source for adding to the walls and floors made of concrete that grandpa built in various parts of the farm when he owned it.

Those rocks in many cases were used to make buildings etc. They had a purpose, some even ended up in rock gardens from a couple ladies who would come with their picnic lunches and load up their trunk and head home in the afternoon with us kids making bets as to if their car would actually make it over the big hill they had to travel over to get back to Norfolk.

God had a plan for some "rocks." Oh, they were called other names like "you stiff necked people" or their given name of Israelites. God picked these rocks from out of the whole world of "rocks" before Him. We wonder as we read of them in the Old Testament, we wonder why God picked them, them who so many times turned their back on Him so quickly. It was if He had picked stones, so hard headed, so deaf to His talking to them it was if He were talking to rocks.

They had just seen how God delivered them from the hands of the mighty Egyptians and while Moses is up on the mountain that was covered with smoke, with all sorts of thunder and lightning that they decide to make that golden calf to worship. 40 days, a little

over a month and all they had experienced was thrown away. Then in the desert, they complained they didn't have veggies or the right kind of meat to eat. God had to provide something that they needed not only for food but for trusting in the daily providence of God.

There are all sorts of other instances. Many times God shows through with His power as this small nation of people went up against larger, more powerful nations but just like the shepherd boy who faced a giant, God defeated enemies time after time because He didn't want a people who would trust in their might and not His.

He picked them as His own. They were to remain pure, not intermarry with the other nations as that would only invite them to turn to other gods. They were to be as God had Isaiah prophesy: **Is. 49:6** he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." **or:**

Is. 52:10 The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. **and another:**

Is. 60:3 Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Simeon remembered Isaiah's prophecy that day in the temple when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus there when she came for her purification as God commanded in Leviticus chapter 12.

These chosen people, these chosen "rocks" of His were to be a light to the other nations of the world, a light to them so they could see through the darkness of their sins to the light of the Gospel so they could be given the source of their salvation.

I don't know if any of you have ever built walls with rocks. Look at the wall behind me. Cyndi and I have a wall surrounding our fireplace upstairs built by which looks to be by the same mason who built this wall. If you sit in the upstairs of my house and look at the wall, you can see that certain rocks were picked to be in certain places just as this wall. The builder was an artist. He chose stones, rocks to build both walls. This a free standing wall, the one in my home is attached to the wall behind it. They are both great looking walls. Each stone was picked for a purpose as the wall went up.

God picked the Israelites to be His own people. They were to be His "wall" to show to the world that He, their God, was the only true God who chose them above all nations, not because they were so great but because He was so great that He could even use this little nation to take on the big dogs, even go against the great walls of Jericho with trumpets, torches inside of jars and the loud shouts of the people, to bring walls down that were built, maybe even out of rocks, but it wasn't built on rocks that could stand up to God.

God's people were picked to build a nation that would be dedicated to be a nation that would shine the light of truth, the light of God's love to the world. That is what they were supposed to do but what did they decide they wanted to do instead? Instead of turning to the source of light, and power, they thought they could do their own thing. Sure, to the world it may have looked like they

were a pure white goodness of a people dedicated to the work of the Lord but instead they were only white washed tombs, pretty to look at on the outside, but inside dead, the light extinguished by their own sin.

Instead of being a light to the Gentiles, they turned in on themselves so much that when their promised Messiah, the one they had been looking to come ever since He was promise to be given them in the garden to Adam, Eve, and Satan actually came, they rejected Him as the stone wall builder rejects certain stones, choosing others in his vision of what he wants to build.

Imagine you being the builder. You have all these stones laying there. There is this one stone, a large stone but one that doesn't fit your vision for the wall. That stone just happens to be laying where you have to step over it, time and time again. It is large enough that as you are stepping over it, once in awhile you trip over it, saying an unkind word, and then as you are focused on that other stone, you forget about it. As you continue to build that wall, that stone is ever in the way. You don't take time to move it out of the way but leave it there until one day, you have had enough, how are you going to get that large stone out of the way. Maybe you could call in the Judas heavy equipment company to provide what you need to get rid of it, get it out of the way, once and for all time.

The Judas company comes in and provides for getting rid of that rock that has caused so many problems with the easy construction of your vision, your masterpiece, so it is taken away, done with or so you think. You have rejected that stone, choosing others. There is another builder though that sees the discarded stone and knows this stone is special. He uses it not just in any old place in His building but decides this stone the other builder rejected was just the stone to be the cornerstone, the stone upon which all the other stones find their foundation.

God chose the Israelites to be a light to the nations. They failed, chose to not shine the light of truth to the nations. They instead chose to send Jesus to the cross, rejecting Him as their Savior. Jesus, the cornerstone is the stone believers are built on, to be living stones, to shine to our world, a world that is living in darkness, not realizing they are dead in their trespasses and sins. They are thinking they are alive, but are on death row, just passing the time until that day when they will find themselves dead, until that day when Jesus comes again to separate the sheep from the goats, believers from unbelievers, believers to eternal life, and unbelievers death in hell where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, separated from the God, separated from His love and mercy forever.

Peter writes that we are: **1Pet. 2:9-10** . . . a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

We are that chosen people. Yes, God chose the Israelites but they rejected the Word, made flesh, Jesus. They chose to build with themselves choosing the stones. You are chosen by Jesus to be stones to built up into a spiritual kingdom.

God chose you. He chose you to bring the Good News to those who are, yes, living in darkness, even as the sun shines everyday. They are living in spiritual darkness, unable to see the hand in front of their face as if they are in the darkness of Carlsbad Caverns.

Have you looked to see if you are shining His light? How can you tell? Where did Peter say the Israelites went wrong? They disobeyed the Word. What does the Word say for us to do? We know the verses so well: **Matt. 28:19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

You may know that the “GO” isn’t an imperative but it should be understood this way: Therefore “AS YOU ARE GOING”, as you are living your life, we are to make disciples. How are we to do that? Baptizing and teaching them the commands of Jesus as He is with you in all this, leading you to people who need to hear, be taught that we are all sinners who have only one hope and that is Jesus, the cornerstone, with our bodies as a temple of the Holy Spirit by being built on Him.

We are to be His disciples, discipling others, those He places in our lives as we live out our lives, build on Him as our foundation.

We have OUR plans though, don’t we. We have our ideas about how to live our lives. Yes, we want to do good, to be witnesses to the world around us but too many times we choose to let the cornerstone be a stone of stumbling over ourselves a rock of offense, it would seem as we don’t choose to even say the name that is above every other name. We are afraid we will not pick the right stone, the right word to say.

Think about it, you didn’t ride that bicycle perfectly the first time you crawled on it. You may even have gotten skinned knees or elbows but you kept at it. You climbed on board again and again, until you could ride it so well that it took your doing things on it that probably shouldn’t be done before you crashed and burned again.

Have the attitude of Christ Jesus who chose to give of Himself for all. He sacrificed Himself to be the cornerstone, so that nations of the world would see the light of truth and salvation that is found in none other.

Jesus can either be a cornerstone to be built on or a stone that is in the way, a tripping hazard to get people to actually look where they are walking, to eternal life or eternal death. Jesus is the same stone only there are two ways to take Him, as a cornerstone or a stumbling block. May He keep us resting on Him.