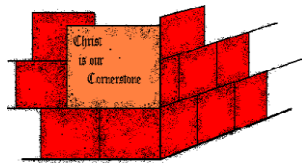


## **Theme: Jesus, the Rock**

- 1. The Cornerstone**
- 2. The Stumbling Block**



### **Text: 1 Peter 2:2-10 (EHV)**

<sup>2</sup> Like newborn babies, crave the pure milk of the word so that by it you may grow up with the result being salvation. <sup>3</sup> Certainly you have tasted that the Lord is good! <sup>4</sup> As you come to him, the Living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, <sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, in order to bring spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For it says in Scripture:

See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone,  
and the one who believes in him will certainly not be put to shame.

<sup>7</sup> Therefore, for you who believe, this is an honor. But for those who do not believe:

The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,

<sup>8</sup> and,

a stone over which they stumble and a rock over which they fall.

Because they continue to disobey the word, they stumble over it. And that is the consequence appointed for them.

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> At one time you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. At one time you were not shown mercy, but now you have been shown mercy.

"Like a Rock!" You may recognize that phrase as the longtime advertising slogan for Chevy trucks. What qualities of a rock do you think the manufacturers of Chevy trucks want you to think of when they used that slogan, "Like a Rock"? Probably not the fact that rocks can't move on their own, or that they're really uncomfortable to sit on! No, they want you to think of the dependability, the strength, and the durability of a rock when you think about their trucks.

Chevrolet, of course, was not the first one to use a "rock" as a symbol. Our text for this morning was written by an apostle whose very name means "rock" or "stone"—Peter. In our text he was writing about the true "Rock" that is more dependable, stronger, and more permanent than any other "rock" there ever was, or is, whether real or symbolic. He is of course speaking of **Jesus, the Rock!**

Peter describes some of Jesus' "rock-like" qualities in our text as he calls Him "**Living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious**" (v. 4). He's not dead. He's not a lifeless hunk of granite. The body of **Jesus, the Rock** did not stay lifeless in the "rock" of the tomb. He's alive! And He lives and reigns forever! He is the "living rock" that divides all people into two groups: Those who believe in Him, rely on Him for salvation, and "build" their lives on Him; and those who reject Him, stumble over Him and His Word, and are destroyed because of their unbelief.

Jesus is indeed, the "**Rock of our salvation**" (Psalm 95:1) as the book of Psalms declares. That is the illustration Peter is conveying by the first type of "rock" he compares Jesus to in our text. First, Peter calls Jesus **1. The Cornerstone**.

"For it says in Scripture: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who believes in him will certainly not be put to shame.'" (v. 6). Now, in our day, the laying of a cornerstone is mostly for ceremonial purposes. For example, the first church I served in had a

“ceremonial” cornerstone near the front entryway doors. It had the name of congregation on it and the date the building was built as well as words from **Ephesians 2:8, “By grace are ye saved, through faith” (KJV)**. The Gospel message on that ceremonial cornerstone was meant to be a reminder of the true **“Cornerstone”** on which the congregation was built: Jesus and His Word.

In Peter’s day, however, the cornerstone was far more than symbolic or ceremonial. In those days cornerstone in any building project was the most important block in the entire building. The cornerstone needed to be perfectly measured and cut since all the other foundation stones were lined up and measured in relation to it. As a result, all the other blocks, stones, and bricks of the building were lined up, measured, and laid in relation to this cornerstone as well. If your cornerstone was bad, your foundation was bad. If your foundation was bad, your building would not stand for very long. Christ is the perfect Cornerstone. He is the centerpiece of God’s church. He is the focal point of the foundation which God’s church is built upon. This foundation is the Bible itself: The God-inspired words of the Old Testament prophets, and New Testament apostles (**cf. Ephesians 2:20**). That is our foundation and the Bible’s central message: Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Savior. Without that foundation and that **Cornerstone**, God’s Church would fall. We would fall, eternally!

Our faith and our life are built on that foundation with Christ as the **Cornerstone**. All our teaching, believing, and living are lined up and measured in Him. In a world that is full of confusion, temptation, lies, and deception, the Word of Jesus our Lord remains true, and unchangeable. His Law cuts through all the excuses, the rationalizations, and moral compromises our age and our culture has made and holds us all accountable to God’s unchanging perfect standards. But His Gospel also cuts through all of Satan’s lies about our own worthlessness and despair over our guilt and sins and holds before our eyes and hearts the eternal, unchangeable love and full forgiveness we see in Jesus’ cross where He died for us and in His empty tomb where He rose again to give us eternal life!

Notice also from our text that in Jesus, the **“Living Stone”** **“you also, like living stones, are being built as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, in order to bring spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (v. 5)**. We are pictured as the individual building blocks of Christ’s church. Did you notice, however, that Peter calls us **“living stones”** and not living “blocks” or “bricks”? Bricks and blocks are all alike—same shape, same color, texture, and size. However, look around you. Do you look exactly like everyone else? Do you have the same gifts, talents, interests, or personality as everyone else? Of course not! We are very individual, very unique “stones” in God’s Church! We are all different shapes, colors, textures, and sizes. You are truly “one of a kind” creation of God! There is no one else in all His creation that is exactly like you! And yet despite our individuality, our uniqueness, and the incredible variety of our talents, interests, and personalities we have a real “oneness.” That “oneness” is found in Jesus! In Him, and by Him we are joined together with God and with each other through faith. He is the “mortar” that glues together the **“living stones”** of His Church. Peter says in our text that we **“living stones are being built as spiritual house...through Jesus Christ” (v. 5)**.

How do we **“living stones”** grow in oneness with Christ and each other? How do we draw strength from Christ the **“Living Stone”** and **“Cornerstone”** of our faith and life and use the gifts and talents He’s given us to grow His kingdom and spread the Gospel message? Well, the same way we “grew” physically when we were babies: We drank milk! Peter writes in our text, **“Like newborn babies, crave the pure milk of the word so that by it you may grow up with the result being salvation. Certainly you have tasted that the Lord is good!” (v. 2-3)**. Notice, Peter says the **“pure milk of the word.”** That’s where we’ll get our spiritual strength and growth! Only from the **“pure milk”** of God’s Word—no harmful additives, subtractions, or substitutions!

Jesus is also described as another type of “rock” in our text. One that is a bit more surprising, unexpected, and even “disturbing.” He is called in our text, **“a stone over which they stumble and a rock over which they fall. Because they continue to disobey the word, they stumble over it. And that is the consequence appointed for them. (v. 8).** Jesus, the Rock who is the **1. Cornerstone** of all who believe

is **"The stone which the builders rejected"** by **"those who do not believe"** (v. 7). To the unbeliever Jesus is a **2. Stumbling Block**, a fearsome boulder, an immovable obstacle who will eventually crush and shatter all who rejected Him and did not build their faith on the salvation He came to give them freely, willingly, and lovingly. If we trust in our own righteousness, our own good works, or simply in the fact that we aren't as bad as the next guy so surely God's going to give me a "free pass" into heaven—well, then our souls will be "smashed" on the rock of Christ's words, **"He who believes in Him [God's Son] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"** (John 3:18). The Bible clearly tells us, **"For by grace [God's undeserved, unearned love] you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast"** (Ephesians 2:8-9).

How about Jesus' words from our Gospel reading for this morning from John chapter 14: **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"** (John 14:6). Those words are seen by many as being very "offensive." They are a **"stumbling block"** for many people. "What do you mean Jesus is the only way to heaven? What do you mean He is the only one true God and the only way to know the true God? What about all the billions of people in the world who don't believe in Jesus as their God or Savior? Are they all condemned?" Our own human reason and feelings can be offended at these words also. However, we did not make up these words ourselves, or this teaching about salvation alone through Jesus the only true God and true Savior. Jesus Himself taught it! He came to be the **Cornerstone** of faith, life, and salvation for all people for all time and every place and culture. That's why He died for the sins of the whole world! But for those who do not believe, like the Pharisees and religious leaders of Jesus' day who rejected Him and made Him their enemy, He is an immovable, unbreakable **Stumbling Block** upon which they will eventually be judged and condemned.

How about you? Is Jesus your **Cornerstone**? Or are you "offended" by these words of Jesus? Is He instead a **Stumbling Block** to you? Remember when Jesus had fed the 5000 miraculously with just 5 loaves of bread and two small fish? After that incredible miracle Jesus wanted to teach the people that He was the true "bread of life," and those that "ate" from Him—that is believed in Him—had **"everlasting life"** (John 6:47). Do you remember what many of the people said in response to these soul-saving words? **"Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, 'This is a hard saying; who can understand it?'...From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more"** (John 6:60, 66).

Those are some of the saddest, most tragic words in all of Scripture! Do you remember what Jesus said to His disciples after this? **When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, 'Does this offend you?...Then Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also want to go away?'"** (John 6:61, 67). May we always answer the way Peter, the one who was inspired to write the words of our text, answered Jesus question, **But Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'"** (John 6:68-69).

By God's grace we are able to hear and believe Peter's incredible reminder in the last verses of our text, **"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. At one time you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. At one time you were not shown mercy, but now you have been shown mercy"** (v. 9-10).

May Jesus always be **"the Rock"** of our life and our salvation; the **"Living Stone"** which gives us life and joins us in the inseparable "mortar" of faith to Him and in fellowship and love with our fellow **"living stones."** May He never be a **"Stumbling Block"** to us, but rather may we joyfully and confidently always sing in the words of our closing hymn, *"Christ is our Cornerstone, on Him alone we build"* (Hymn 912 v. 1 LSB; 465 v. 1 TLH). Amen.