

**April 20, 2008**  
**Easter 5**

*"Living Stones Built on Christ"*

**1 PETER 2:4-10**

---

*As you come to him, the living Stone-- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- <sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." <sup>7</sup> Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," <sup>8</sup> and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message-- which is also what they were destined for. <sup>9</sup> But you are 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. <sup>10</sup> 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.*

You are living stones! What an amazing way to describe your life that is built on Jesus the living Stone. The stone I am holding in my hand is not alive. I cannot plant it in the ground and watch it grow like this potato. Nor can I put it into the micro wave, mash it like a potato and eat it. Stones are dead, yet the Bible uses this picture of a living stone to show how special you are.

Stones are different than bricks. Bricks are all the same, because they are made from one mold. Stones have different sizes, shapes and colors. Thousands of years of time wore this stone smooth and gave it the shape it has, or it may be that our God placed beautiful stones into the world he made at creation. He made stones that look like they have been around for millions of years of time, beautiful in their old age.

The Lord carefully placed you into his church as living stones. Each of you has been designed by God, then carefully selected and placed where you are that you might glorify the Lord and give him your praises. Just as a stone mason will carefully place each stone into a wall, the Lord has placed you where you are at this moment and time in history to glorify him with your life. Your life would be nothing, empty and worthless if it were not built on Jesus, the living stone who also said in John 10 "I have come that they might have life and have it to the full."

**See the solid foundation**

Your position in this life as living stones stands out in this community because you are built on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ your Savior. Peter writes, "As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built up into a spiritual house." Just as the stone mason takes a stone and places it on a solid foundation, so the Lord God has taken you and placed your life

on Jesus the living Stone. Stones cannot move by themselves. They cannot develop legs and begin to walk. They depend on the forces of water or ice to move them, or people to pick them up and put them into a different location. In his love and mercy the Lord took spiritually dead people like us, and placed us on Jesus the living Stone. We are built on Jesus and we come alive in him. In the front of our home we have a stone with a fish symbol on it. Years ago, we made this in Star Bible camp. The stone had nothing to do with the honorable privilege it now has of being a stone with a symbol of a fish on it.

Jesus is called the living Stone. In the psalms he is often called the Rock of our salvation. We even have a popular hymn that speaks about Jesus being a solid Rock. "Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee." The person who wrote that hymn, Alex Toplady, once estimated that by the time a young man reaches the age of sixteen he will have committed 600 million sins. When you know the depth of corruption in your heart, you would agree that estimate is probably too low. We find no hope in ourselves, our only hope is to be built on Christ.

In the Old Testament the Lord our God used the picture of a stone to help us appreciate how he does everything to lay down a solid foundation of eternal life for us. It says in the Scriptures, "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trust in him will never be to shame." In ancient times a stone mason knew how to build a house with stone by laying a strong foundation with the big stones. I know someone who built a house in Santa Barbara on a steep hill, but when the home was built they drilled large holes into the ground until they hit solid rock. They filled the holes with iron rods and concrete, so if there is mudslide in a rainy year, the house will stand solidly on the rock. Years ago, in North Dakota Norwegian farmers wanted to replace their small church that had walls of sod with stone walls. They hired a Polish stone mason from Minneapolis to build their church. He told the farmers to bring all the stones together in a semi circle around the place they were going to build the church. He carefully selected the largest stones for the foundations, and with a blow from his hammer he split the rocks that would be used for the walls. God our heavenly Father carefully planned from all eternity that you would build your life on something very solid, Jesus His Son, and you would never be disappointed.

In Isaiah 59 the Lord tells us how carefully he selected Jesus to be the foundation of your faith. He says that there was no place for truth to be found. "Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own right arm worked salvation for him and his own righteousness sustained him." The Father carefully selected Jesus as the source or foundation of our salvation, because no one could build their hope of eternal life on what they could do to make themselves acceptable to God. In our gospel for today Jesus tells us how blessed we are when we build our lives on him: "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except through me." Build your life on other religions, or yourself, or your feelings, or trying to keep God's law, you will fail. Build on Jesus and you will live and never be put to shame.

Peter tells us, "Now to you who believe, this stone is precious." Why is Jesus the rock of our salvation so precious to us? I am holding in my hand a plumb line that people have used for thousands of years to build straight walls, and keep them solidly resting on the

foundation stones. In the Old Testament the Lord says, "I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line." If God judges me by his standard of perfection or holiness then there is no hope for me. I am eternally lost. However if my life is built on Jesus, who is perfect, righteous and holy, then there is hope. Who Jesus is, and how he lived his life, and how he died for my sins, personally becomes mine through faith. Romans 5 says, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

For some Jesus is a stone that is rejected. "But to those who do not believe, 'The Stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,' and, 'A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.'" These words about the capstone that the builders rejected come from Psalm 118. Psalm 118 begins with the well known words, "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endures forever." It includes such verses as "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." It speaks about the Lord doing something marvelous in our eyes. It is a reference to that great day when the Father raised Jesus from the dead and put him into the final arch of our salvation as the keystone or capstone. Look up at what your God has done for you, and how neatly it all fits together like a stone arch because of Jesus resurrection from the dead. How do some people look at this capstone? They laugh at it and ridicule it and reject it. It is part of natural human condition to reject God doing the perfect job of providing for our salvation. We always want to add something to what God has done, or do it on our own. For many Jesus becomes a stone of stumbling. He appears to them, and they reject him. They disobey the message and they are then destined to suffer the consequences of that rejection. Eventually Jesus the living stone crushes them on the day of judgment.

I am holding in my hand some sand. As you know there is a lot of sand here in Santa Maria that has blown up to this area from the ocean over many years of time. Building a house of stones on sand would spell disaster. Your life has changed so drastically. As living stones you know how foolish it is to build on anything other than Jesus, the solid rock of our salvation. Oprah may offer a life that centers on who you are inside. That life is very popular with people, but it will not last. Jesus the Living Stone offers you life that lasts forever, and life that has meaning and purpose. As living stones you have been placed in a position of life that glorifies Jesus and leads other people to put their trust in him.

### **See the beautiful stones**

As living stones you are part of a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, that offers spiritual sacrifices that are pleasing to God. Think back to the magnificent temple made by King Solomon, and the temple built by Herod to make himself a big hero to the people. Both had large stones in them that formed the walls. Within those walls priests offered animal sacrifices to God that pictured the blood of Jesus that would be shed for us. The Lord God wanted the whole world to come and be part of what the priests were doing within those large massive stones of the temple. Today Jesus has come, and the sacrifices in a temple are no longer necessary. Instead the Lord takes people and makes them living stones to draw attention to what Jesus has done for us and the sacrifice he made for our salvation.

Listen again to how Peter describes how beautiful you are as living stones built on Christ. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who has called you out darkness into

his wonderful light." You are a chosen generation. God has a plan for your life in this generation in which you live. He knows how many heartbeats of time you have left on this earth, and how he will use you for his glory. "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before they came to be." (Psalm 139) You are a royal priesthood. You serve Jesus who is King of kings and Lord of lords. The love that the King of kings and Lord of lords has for you flows through your veins. Poke a Christian anywhere and they bleed with the love Jesus has for them. You are a holy nation, people set apart for God's work. You are a people belonging to God. He has his name on you and you belong to him. Ever think you are not someone very special and valuable with your life on this earth? Then read this verse, and read it and read it again. We are the church, people called out of darkness into his marvelous light. We were once not a people but now we are the people of God. There was a time when we knew nothing about God's mercy, now we believe and trust in it with all of our hearts.

A good stone mason can take a stone like this and split it with his hammer and then place it into a wall, or a fireplace in a living room. He knows how to put the stones together so they are strong and also very beautiful. Think of your life this week as a stone, a precious stone, used by the Lord for his glory and built on Christ. 24/7 you are under the love that you have in Christ, and 24/7 your life has meaning and purpose as living stones to glory the risen Lord and Savior. Amen.