

I.N.I.

Last Sunday after Pentecost
Nov. 22, 2015
I Peter 2:4-8

In Christ Jesus, the Foundation Stone of our life, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

This past week we heard on the news that the cousin of the mastermind behind the attacks in Paris who blew herself up when the police were charging into her apartment had been a party girl. She was involved in alcohol and drugs most of her life. She was abused as a young girl and lived aimlessly until about 10 months ago when she got involved in radical Islamist terrorism. How did that happen?

Possibly because their cause gave her a foundation, gave her something to live and die for. Unfortunately it was an evil cause based on a violent and vengeful foundation.

Just about every builder, businessman, or teacher knows how important a good foundation is. Without a strong foundation a building or bridge would not stand very long. A business needs a broad based backing or foundation in order to grow and last. And in education in order to progress and learn in any subject one must have a basic foundation of terms, facts and figures.

In our society today we see that there is definitely something missing in the lives of so many people like that woman in Paris.

A foundation to their moral principles—

A foundation to their meaning to life—

A foundation to their reason for living and being.

Most just pass through life with this motto: “If it feels good, do it!”

But that eventually is very empty and morally bankrupt. One of the reasons why so many people in this world despair is because they have not built their life upon a solid foundation, especially upon the solid foundation of the Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ.

As one studies the letters of the New Testament, it is interesting to note how naturally the Apostles interpreted Old Testament passages concerning the Messiah and applied them to Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit it had become evident to them that Jesus was indeed the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. We have another example of this Old Testament application to Christ in our text this morning. Peter didn't come up with this idea about Jesus being the Rock of Ages, our Foundation upon whom we build our faith and life. These terms and truths were found in the Old Testament in such passages as Isaiah 28:16: **THEREFORE THUS SAYS THE LORD GOD: “BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE FOR A FOUNDATION, A TRIED STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE, A SURE FOUNDATION;...Psalm 118:22: THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE.**

Isaiah 8:14: **HE WILL BE AS A SANCTUARY, BUT A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE TO BOTH THE HOUSES OF ISRAEL, AS A TRAP AND A SNARE TO THE INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM.**

All of these passages Peter either quotes in their entirety or refers to their contents in our text to clearly show that the Holy Spirit through the Psalmist and through Isaiah was speaking of Jesus, the Christ. Jesus is the One whom the Father chose. Jesus is that Stone of stumbling and that Rock of offense. Jesus is that Cornerstone, that Foundation Stone of our life.

When someone is compared to a rock, it usually denotes strength, endurance, the ability to withstand pain and punishment. But a rock is an inanimate object. It doesn't move, it does not breath, it is not alive, it doesn't have feelings, it doesn't really do anything. That is why Peter calls Christ, not just a stone, but a **LIVING STONE!** One who definitely is alive forevermore. Our theme is:

CHRIST IS OUR FOUNDATION STONE!

The first point that Peter makes in our text is:

I: THIS STONE IS REJECTED BY MEN, BUT CHOSEN BY GOD.

Here Peter is speaking primarily of the unbelieving Jewish people who rejected Christ as their Savior, but he is also speaking of all people who refuse to believe in Christ. The Jewish people, especially the leaders who were to be building up the Kingdom and Church of God, failed to see

Jesus as the only solid and secure foundation for their lives. So they cast Him aside.

The picture is this. Many builders have gathered to build a house, the Lord's House. They search for a proper, fitting stone for the foundation. The Chief Master Builder, God, chooses One, a perfect fit. But the other builders look at it and say, "This Stone is of no use to us," and cast it aside. Then they try to build the Lord's House upon some other foundation, on one they have chosen.

But Christ is the only Foundation for His Church. He is the precious, valuable Rock that God Himself has chosen as the Foundation and Cornerstone for His Church. Anyone who is a part of that Church will build his faith-life upon Jesus.

Jesus is the Chief, Head Cornerstone. Upon Him the whole Church rests. Upon Him and no other is the Church built. He alone is God's chosen Stone. Chosen already in eternity to be that "**Seed of the woman**" who would come to "**crush Satan's head,**" to break the devil's hold over sinful mankind. He has been chosen to set us free from the bondage of sin, Satan, death and hell.

God says, "**I laid that Foundation Stone in Zion.**" Zion is another name for the Church, but it also can refer to Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, for it was there in Jerusalem where Christ's sacrifice upon the cross for mankind was made. It was there where His resurrection took place. It was there where the Pentecost miracle occurred. There in Jerusalem where the events transpired that have become the basis and the foundation of our faith, hope and our life.

II: THIS STONE CAUSES MANY TO STUMBLE AND FALL.

We jump to the end of our text and see that Peter is again speaking of the unbelievers--those who rejected, cast aside the Foundation Stone, Jesus. Peter quotes Isaiah 8:14: **A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE.** Let's go back to that first picture of the builders who cast the Foundation Stone aside and tried to build with some other foundation. They are never really rid of that Stone. For as they go about building their lives, they continually stumble and trip over that Stone.

What is the Lord saying here? Christ is always around. Unbelievers cannot get away from Him. They stumble over Christ and His Word because they are disobedient to the Word and their conscience is pricked. They live their life in what they believe to be truth but it is false and when they are confronted with Christ and the truth they stumble over it.

But why was Christ such a stumbling stone and offense to the Jews? In Paul's letter to the Romans we are told that the Jews "demanded signs of Jesus" They said to Jesus "**Show us a sign and then we will believe in You.**" Well Jesus had given them many signs in His lifetime: healing the sick, raising the dead, opening the eyes of the blind, healing the handicapped, having the Gospel preached to the spiritually poor and the final sign: His own death and resurrection. But the Jews wanted a different kind of sign for they wanted a different kind of Messiah. They wanted one who would set them free from Roman rule and give them what they wanted in the here and now. So also people today look to Jesus to end all wars, eliminate poverty, banish all suffering, assure civil rights, bring peace on earth, take away all of their problems, make them rich and happy and when He doesn't do this then people stumble and fall on account of Him.

The unbelieving Jews also stumbled over Christ, the Foundation Stone because they did not believe Jesus to be God. They could not believe what their eyes did not see. This poor Rabbi, this common Criminal condemned to die: God in human flesh and blood? No way! So also the world today stumbles over Christ's humanity and divinity. How could this lowly Human be divine? How could this Baby, born in a barn in Bethlehem, be the very Son of God in human flesh and blood? A great story, yes! A great man, yes! But the God/Man? No!

III: BUILT UPON THIS STONE WE WILL NEVER BE PUT TO SHAME.

Peter quotes Isaiah 28:6 and writes: **AND HE WHO BELIEVES ON HIM WILL BY NO MEANS BE PUT TO SHAME.** Relying and believing in Christ means we will never be put to shame. The Greek here is a very strong negative: "**never, never put to shame.**" This is God's way of saying that in spite of how things may look or appear during trials and tribulations, during times of temptation and sadness--Christ will **NEVER** let us down, **NEVER!** He has promised us, **I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU...I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE.**

Those who put their confidence, hope and trust in Christ will never be disappointed. He is the One trustworthy Friend, the Solid Rock for our life. All others: our family--parents, grandparents,

bothers and sisters, children, husband and wife will fail us. Our Christian friends and fellow members will fail us. Our pastor will fail us. We fail ourselves. At one time or another all of our comforters and supporters in this life will let us down. But the person who depends entirely upon Christ will **NEVER, NEVER** be ashamed, abandoned, or disappointed.

What comforting and confident words these were for the persecuted Christians to whom Peter was writing. What confidence and spiritual strength these words are to us.

When we are confronted with our many sins: our selfish motives; our sinful thoughts and intents of the heart; our insincere deeds; our biting and angry words---we can only look to Jesus for cleansing and then for the strength to live like He did. Christ and His Word give us the ability to live more Christ-like in our thoughts, words and deeds.

When we are tempted by our own sinful flesh to follow its desires or when the world and its ways allure us--we can turn to Christ and His Word for the strength to say **"NO!"** When we are called upon to endure suffering, pain, loss and misery we can look to Jesus and His words of comfort and strength to give us all that we need to endure.

When we are depressed, despairing, discouraged and defeated we have the Rock, the Foundation Stone who has promised us that **ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD** and who has said to us: **IN THIS WORLD, YOU WILL HAVE TROUBLE, BUT TAKE HEART! I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD!**

IV: AS LIVING STONES WE WILL OFFER UP SACRIFICES OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING TO GOD.

Peter writes: **YOU ALSO, AS LIVING STONES, ARE BEING BUILT UP A SPIRITUAL HOUSE, A HOLY PRIESTHOOD, TO OFFER UP SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES ACCEPTABLE TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.**

By nature we were worthless stones, stones that would have been thrown away and rejected. But by God's grace alone He has made us stones that are used in His Kingdom. Even as we are built upon the Living Stone, Jesus, so also through the Holy Spirit we have been made **"living stones,"** in God's House. God has chosen us and has built us, one by one into His Church, just as a builder lays one brick upon another to build a building. Each one of us then becomes a very valued and precious stone in the House of God.

And what is our calling? Peter now shifts the picture from us being living stones in the Church to us being holy priests. The calling of the priests of the Old Testament was to offer up sacrifices and prayers for the people. We are such priests. But we do not offer up the bloody sacrifices of lambs and goats and bulls. Christ, The High Priest has already offered up Himself as the One bloody sacrifice to end all sacrifices, to pay for all of our sins. Our offerings are spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, of obedience and sharing our faith.

The author to the Hebrews gives us some insight as to what these spiritual sacrifices are that are pleasing to God. We read in chapter 13:15-16: **THEREFORE BY HIM (JESUS) LET US CONTINUALLY OFFER THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE TO GOD, THAT IS, THE FRUIT OF OUR LIPS, GIVING THANKS TO HIS NAME. BUT DO NOT FORGET TO DO GOOD AND TO SHARE, FOR WITH SUCH SACRIFICES GOD IS WELL PLEASED.** Then in verse 17 he speaks of obedience and in verse 18 he speaks of prayer as another spiritual sacrifice.

All of these offerings and sacrifices can be and are acceptable to God the Father only through Jesus Christ. Even praise and thanksgiving to God would not be acceptable if not made by one who believes in Jesus, for only a Christian can praise and thank the living God. Again we read in Hebrews: **WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD.** Because of Christ's sacrifice of Himself He makes our sacrifices of love and obedience acceptable to the Father.

In Matthew, Jesus speaks of two different responses to His Word. There is the one who hears His Word, believes it and in faith puts it into practice. His house is built upon the Rock. Jesus says: **AND THE RAIN DESCENDED, THE FLOODS CAME, AND THE WINDS BLEW AND BEAT ON THAT HOUSE; AND IT DID NOT FALL. FOR IT WAS FOUNDED ON THE ROCK.**

Then there is the other who rejects Christ and His Word, who has cast aside the Foundation Stone, who does not put Jesus' words into practice in his life but lives according to his own philosophy or according to the world's interests and builds his house upon sand. Jesus says of him: **AND THE RAIN DESCENDED, THE FLOODS CAME, AND THE WINDS BLEW AND**

BEAT ON THAT HOUSE; AND IT FELL. AND GREAT WAS ITS FALL.

Upon what foundation have you been building your house, your lives? Is it on the foundation of your Rock, your Savior Jesus Christ and His unchangeable Word, or is it on the foundation of the shifting sands of your feelings and emotions, of the riches, wisdom and philosophy of this world, of the cares and pleasures of whatever comes your way? One leads to security, peace, eternal joy and life. The other leads to insecurity, separation from God, everlasting sorrow and death.

May the Holy Spirit lead us to continue to build upon the One and only Foundation Stone so that even in the face of the floods and storms of life, yes in the face of death itself, we will not be moved, we will not be disappointed or ashamed, but being covered with Christ's shed blood and righteousness we will stand forever as living stones in God's House.

Amen.