



## Chosen People

(1 Peter 2:1-10)

As some of you know we have just had a one storey extension built on the rear of our house. Although I am probably in trouble with Sue as she says I mustn't bore people by talking continually about it. But bear with me for a few moments. So here is a brief view of the extension as it went up in video format...

{video}

Hopefully you saw that the builder had to dig and create a firm foundation before he could start building all the brickwork that made up the building. Today in our passage from 1 Peter 2, we are looking at us being built into a wonderful building of living stones. Truly we are a chosen people, but we need to understand the importance of Jesus in what God is doing and see what we are meant to be as the living stones.

Let us pray:

### Jesus - the Corner Stone

Peter in this passage refers to Jesus directly as the most important stone:

In verse 4 he writes: *As you come to him, the living Stone.*

Then in verse 6 quoting from Isaiah he 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>1</sup>*

In verse 7 in the light of the Jewish rejection of Jesus he still points out his stature as the corner stone: *"The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"* & then in verse 8: *A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall."*

The verse in Isaiah more literally say:

*A stone—a tried stone, a corner stone precious, a settled foundation.*<sup>2</sup>

So Jesus is the corner stone of the building. Well here is a picture of a corner stone. This was a large important stone that held 2 wall together, and was very foundational to the building.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 28:16

<sup>2</sup> Young's Literal Translation



Paul in the second chapter of Ephesians explains how Jesus brings together the Jews and Gentiles, much like the corner stone holds together 2 walls. Here are a few parts of what he says:

*Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone<sup>3</sup>*

Notice Paul's reference to Jesus as the chief cornerstone.

No doubt on the church weekend some of this depth in Ephesians of Jesus bringing us all together will be explored. So I don't want to look at this aspect. But rather this morning for us all to see the importance of Jesus, in building us together as living stones into the church.

He is the chief corner stone, who is so important to us as the living stones. We know from other passages that he is the head of the church.

But is so easy to loose our focus on Jesus as the chief corner stone.

Some churches and Christians focus very much on the Holy Spirit. So much of their teaching and encouragement is all about the Holy Spirit. They pray to the Holy Spirit and one might say that their focus is more on the Spirit than Jesus. Now the Holy Spirit is vital to our individual Christian lives and the healthy life of the church. But I believe that one of his main roles is to point us towards Jesus. He helps us see Jesus.

*"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me."<sup>4</sup>*

So this is one of his main tasks. In addition he leads people in to the Kingdom, he is the power to heal the sick and set people free. But I don't believe he calls attention to himself that much. But he is still awesome God, glorious and worthy of worship.

So we do need to be aware of and respond to the Holy Spirit. Let's above all be open to Him.

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<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 2:12,14&19

<sup>4</sup> John 15:26



Some other churches and Christians focus heavily on the Bible. In fact some go as far as to say that when the books of the Bible were finally chosen from all the others, which is known as the canon of Scripture, the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased. Now the Bible is vital. It the written word of God. It is the source book on which our believes are based. But many Biblical scholars would say that the written word from beginning to end reveals the Jesus the living word.

In fact John writing towards the end of his Gospel writes:

*Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.<sup>5</sup>*

So John is clear he wrote his account of the life of Jesus so that we might know him and have life in Him. So we need to read our Bibles and know them, that we might know Jesus even more closely. I am growing to love the Bible as God's word as I read it and dig into it more and more.

But as I read and studied this passage, with Jesus the chief corner stone, what came to me was this. That our focus need to be on Jesus, rather than on anything else. As the writer to Hebrews says:

*Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.<sup>6</sup>*

Perhaps as we have looked at Jesus as the corner stone, we could sum up this first part of the passage as **'STAY FOCUSSED' on HIM.**

## Church - the living stones

But if Jesus is the chief corner stone then we as the church are the living stones. For Peter writes in verse 5:

*You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house*

Many years ago, more than I care to remember, when I was at college I studied engineering. In fact I studied as an electrical or electronic engineer. So I just love diagrams. In fact when I was in engineering we had a saying, **'that a diagram was worth a thousand words'**.

So here is my diagram of the church as a group of living stones:

Jesus the chief corner stone of course. And us as perfectly formed stones fitting neatly together to form a perfect spiritual house - the church. I don't think so!!

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<sup>5</sup> John 20:30 & 31

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 12:2



Here is how I think it is: Jesus is still the chief corner stone, holding us together and being foundational. But here is all of us as living stones. Are we perfect and completely whole? Probably not. I am sure there are many here who are becoming much more like Jesus and moving into wholeness and reflecting his nature.

But I know I am still work in progress with Jesus. There are parts of my character and personality that Jesus is still healing and moving towards wholeness. Just ask Sue. Hopefully she won't tell you. But when some carves up my inside and overtakes me from there, cuts across my bonnet into the fast lane, I am not a happy bunny. And love and patience as fruit of the Spirit don't always work. The same when a car sits about 3 feet from the boot of our car and I am doing more than 60 mph.

We are all very different in personality and character. God wants to transform us by the finished work of Jesus on the cross in the power of the Spirit to be the people we were meant to be. For our sins, faults, fears and hurting places to be healed and dealt with. But we come to Jesus just as we are. When we join the church we are far from perfect. And maybe this side of heaven we will never be perfect. The Lord's treasure is contained in the earthen vessels of our life, not perfectly formed gold ones.

This means that we may find it difficult as we interact with one another. We may not get on with every other living stone in the church easily and smoothly.

I think God sometimes does this deliberately as part of our growing process. My friend Charles Slagle has written a little book called Power to Soar. It is a few sentence each day of the year that he feels God has given him. This one perhaps sums this up:

*I often link neatness freaks and sloppy slouches together to heal them. Don't you find my wisdom delightful? Dad*

But some years ago in a previous church when we were looking at this passage of being living stones, we realised that it might not be easy. Some one had the picture or the idea that there is a mortar or filling between the stones. And this filling is love. Agape love. There are 4 main words for love in the Bible. But Agape is the word for that special love that comes from God. If you want to see what it is like, read 1 Corinthians 13. Interesting that this is a favourite passage at wedding services. If taken to heart, perhaps more marriages would succeed. In the middle it describes this type of love, for it says:

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:4-7



In Romans 5 in the AV we read:

*The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.<sup>8</sup>*

This show how much we need the Holy Spirit to fill us, for he will fill our hearts with the love we need, which is one of the fruit of the Spirit. So as we come together as living stones and sometimes find it difficult, it will encourages us to let the fruit of the Spirit to grow. So by God's grace, *love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control<sup>9</sup>* will increase in our lives.

## Chosen People - what we are in Jesus

So having seen that Jesus is the corner stone and that we are the living stones. Let's see some of the qualities or purposes of us as living stones, under the overall heading of Chosen People. There are 4 descriptions in verse 9. Let's look at these briefly together in this final part. I am going to take them in a slightly different order to they appear. The four aspects are:

- Chosen People
- Peculiar People (really)
- Holy Nation
- Royal Priesthood

## Chosen People

Chosen means selected. But not necessarily in an inclusive way. We are chosen by God not to the exclusion of others. And we are chosen for a purpose. Maybe a long time ago but we did all study 'The Purpose Driven Life'. Let's thing about the Jews. God chose a bunch of nomadic people and turned them into the Jews. So Israel both the land and the people was created. But he chose them for a purpose to reveal him to the world around. To the nations around them that had their own gods they were to declare by their very existence that there was only one true God of all the nations. Yahweh was not just the local god of Israel, but the true creator God of all the earth. Through Israel was not only coming revelation, but eventually reconciliation through Jesus. That is that through Jesus all people and all nations would come to know or have deep friendship with God. So we are chosen to know God in a personal way. But we are chosen to serve God, in all the five ways that Rick Warren laid out in his book. The last one was mission. To show the people around us the Lord through Jesus. Not just by words but being his people. And we are a people.

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<sup>8</sup> Romans 5:5 (AV)

<sup>9</sup> Galatians 3:22&23



More accurately translated it is chosen generation.

Generation implies lineage or birth in Biblical language. And are we not the people who have experienced 'new birth' in Jesus, that makes us the chosen people. In Ephesians chapter 1, Paul says:

*For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.<sup>10</sup>*

I find that an amazing thought that God chose each of us before the creation of the world. Notice that it links up with being Holy which also occurs in this verse, that we will look at in a moment.

### Peculiar People (really)

Secondly we are a peculiar people. Well if you read the KJV that is what it says. *As an aside at the later end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was denomination in Essex that called itself the Peculiar People from this verse. They believed in divine healing but not any of the gifts of the Spirit. They wouldn't call a doctor but trusted that God would heal. And some of them were taken to court when their children died, and the authorities believed it was because they hadn't called a doctor. Some of the independent free evangelical chapels in this part of the world were formerly those of this denomination.*

This is one of those tricky words for translators from the original Greek. The TNIV translates it as:

*we are God's special possession.*

One possible translation, more literally is procured or purchased. And it is true that we are purchased by Jesus death. That Jesus paid the price for us in the blood he shed on the cross. When he cried out, 'it is finished', he was saying it is paid triumphantly.

There is also a sense if you look at the root of the word, as encirclement. And maybe it echoes' the thoughts of the book of Revelation of being around the throne of the lamb. Are we not the people who gather around Jesus symbolically on his throne.

### Holy Nation

Next we are called a Holy Nation. I think many of us struggle with this word holy. We know God is holy and think he has a problem mixing with us sinners. But the main meaning of Holy is set apart. God is set apart from us, but virtue of his nature of power and complete absence of sin or imperfection. But when it is applied to us or place. The sense is set apart for a purpose.

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<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 1:4 (TNIV)



Some translations translate use sanctification as a translation, that may not help a lot of people. But we are holy that is to be set apart to become like Jesus. (That is the primary meaning of sanctification). Again there is the meaning of separation unto God himself. Indeed following up being Chosen People we are chosen to declare God to those around us. And one way is to be separate from the world around us in terms of our beliefs and attitudes. Jesus in John 15:18 through 22, clearly says we are not of the world. Yet he does not take us out of the world. Rather we are to live in our society but have his attitudes and standards. So that we will indeed be salt and light to those around us.

But how much do we conform to our society? We live in a very me-centred and selfish society. Indeed one that is often very greedy, particularly when it comes to money. Are we holy or set apart in our attitudes.

The word Nation has about it the sense of family. As God's people, the living stones of the church, we should indeed be the family of God.

## Royal Priesthood

And finally, and I know I have done a whistle stop tour of this great verse, we are a royal priesthood. Jesus is king of kings. Remember Yahweh was meant to be the king of Israel, as his chosen people. They were not meant to have an earthly king. Jesus our corner stone is our king. As we belong to him we have a royal nature. We are princes and princesses in his kingdom. Indeed we are brothers and sisters by adoption into his family.

And we are a priesthood. One of the main functions of a priest in the Bible was to offer sacrifices. They offered animals to God as a sacrifice. They also offered grain and other objects to God on behalf of the people. But we are own priests. We are a royal priesthood and don't need priests to act on our behalf.

But what sacrifices do we offer. Well there are 2 that spring to mind. Firstly as it says later in this verse we are to declare the praise of God. We are called to be priests who offer the sacrifice of praise and worship. And remember worship is life style, not just singing songs and hymns. Remember when we go to school or college. When we do the washing up, walk the dog. When we go to work to earn our money. What ever we do, can be done as to Jesus as an act of worship. I think in these situations at work etc... we can worship Jesus by how we treat people.

The second thing is we can offer ourselves as a living sacrifice. For Paul writes to the Roman Christians.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is true worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 12:1&2 (TNIV)



Remember in the Purpose Driven Life, number 4 was service. So we are not only living stones but living sacrifices. And that Paul links this to true worship and indeed uses the word holy as well.

So as living stones we are all these things...

But let me ask finally do we feel that we truly are living stones joined closely to Jesus the chief corner stone. Dwelling for a moment on the last of these things, do we really feel that we are princes or princesses in Jesus? So many Christians suffer from a low self esteem. People often may not say it but they don't think they are very good Christians. May feel but not be willing to say it but they feel pathetic as Christians. But in Jesus we are a royal priesthood, and we are very - very precious to God. So if you feel that you don't measure up or are struggling then why not come forward for prayer. So that Jesus through the Holy Spirit can strengthen you, to be a **Chosen People; a Peculiar People; a Holy Nation & a Royal Priesthood.**