

Roy's Sermon for August 15, 2021

1 Peter 2:6-8 'How Precious Is Jesus To You?'

Last week we looked at 1 Peter 2:2-5 'The Royal Priesthood of God'. We looked only at the second part of the verse: "To be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." And I asked the question: What does the priesthood of God look like for us today? I explained that it was not talking about special or set apart people, but that we are all priests in God's Kingdom. Jesus is the Great High Priest, and we are His underlings! We saw the ordaining by God of Aaron and his line. Even while he was at the foot of Mount Sinai building an idol and leading the people in abomination!

We saw also that the Levitical priesthood was born out of a righteous anger and zeal for the holiness and reputation of the Name of God. They strapped on their swords and they put to death their friends, family and neighbours, who had blasphemed the Lord at the foot of the holy mountain. Again, even while Moses was receiving instructions for Israelite life, and the priesthood of Aaron was being ordained by God, and the whole nation had heard the Commandments from God own mouth. "We will do everything that the Lord had said. We will obey," they swore. But they then bowed down to the idol that Aaron had made, and descended into sexual depravity in the presence of God. (Idolatry goes hand in hand with sexual depravity.)

Finally we saw that God was going to annihilate the people for their sin, and then make Moses' line into a great nation. But Moses placed himself between the people and God's wrath. He humbly but boldly petitions God to remember His promises to the patriarchs. Otherwise the world would see that it was with murderous intent that He delivered Israel out of Egypt. Remember your Word Lord, he pleaded!

That's what true priests do. They hold to the scriptures for the sake of the people. They are the shepherds, the servants of God. As they care for His Sheep. Revelation 1:6 "we are a Kingdom and priests." Not a Kingdom with priest, but "a Kingdom and priests." Not offering bulls and goats, but ourselves, as Romans 12:1 describes "as living sacrifices."

And so we pick up the letter in 1 Peter 2:6-8 'How Precious Is Jesus To You?' as Peter continues with this metaphor of Christ building His spiritual house, His Church. V6 "see I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trust in him will never be put to shame." Friends, may I again suggest, that the reason Peter uses these imageries, is these were the things that the people of the day could understand. They understood the building of the temple. It had taken 46 years up until Jesus' day, and it wouldn't be finished until 64AD. And then would be destroyed some six years later. These things they cherished and clung to, which were all tied to their Jewish heritage and traditions! They loved those things because they could touch them and see them.

That was their greatest problem, and it can be or ours also! Because the things of the Spirit of Christ's Kingdom come by faith. Faith believes without seeing. But mankind as we all know, has the need to believe in what we can see. This is why idolatry abounds even today. People have pictures and statues of animals, Mary and other dead so-called Saints. There are shrines in people's houses and idolatrous temples throughout the world! You may have even like me, heard people say: If Jesus shows Himself to me, I'll believe in Him. We want to hear God speak out of the darkness and the shadows. And if He chooses to He can, God can do whatever He likes, He is God!

But He has ordained, He has chosen to speak to us out of His Word. 2 Timothy 3:16 also "All scripture is God breathed." It is the very breath of God the Holy Spirit, inspiring the hearts of men.

And his Word is embodied in His Son, the Living Word Jesus Christ! John 1:1-5: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning, through him all things were made without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." So Peter uses this imagery of Jesus building His house, but not with physical stones. And notice, he refers to what was spoken of about Jesus Himself through the prophet Isaiah: "For in the scripture it says."

So clearly while seeking to get his hearers to cast aside their need of those man made things, being in a real sense those idols to which they were clinging, the temple and all its trappings, Peter also was encouraging them to cling to those things which Jesus Himself did! When attacked by Satan for those 40 days and 40 nights, in the wilderness after His baptism, what did He do? How did He combat Satan's temptings? He said, "It is written". "It is written." "It is written."

So don't put your hope and trust in those things which you can see and touch and idolise. Put your hope and trust in the unchanging promises of God! Quoting from Isaiah 28:16: "For in scripture it says, "See, I lay a stone in Zion a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who puts his trust in him will never be put to shame." But Isaiah actually used the phrase, "will not be dismayed." Well the word dismayed is defined as 'Being deprived of courage. To be filled with apprehension. To be alarmed'. So God is, "laying a stone," "a precious cornerstone. For the spiritual House of Jesus which is being built. And that stone of course, is even Christ himself! "And the one who trusts in him will never be dismayed." They will never be alarmed you see. They will never be deprived of courage in their declaration whose Jesus is. No shame will not be their problem, because they get their vindication not from mere men, but from God!

Beloved, these are great words of encouragement for us today. Because if we build the foundation of our faith, only, and always upon that "precious stone" which has been laid by God Himself. We will never lack courage to speak of Jesus. Will never be ashamed to own the Gospel and its` Author. And we will never be alarmed about what the world would seek to do to us and say against us. Because we build upon that "Rock," upon that "Stone," upon that "foundation," through who's Hands, the entire universe came into being! As the hymn that we sing says, 'Thou whose almighty Word, chaos and darkness heard, and took their flight. Hear us we humbly pray and where the gospel day sheds not it's glorious ray, let there be light!'

Yes we call upon that One, and we build up on that One, who spoke, and the universe came into being out of nothing! 1 Corinthians 10:1-4: "For I did not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and they all passed through the sea. They all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink, and they drank from the spiritual Rock that accompanied them, and that Rock was Christ."

Can you see that though the Old Testament followers of God didn't know it, (and indeed they couldn't know it because the nature of the Saviour had not yet been made known to them), but yes the Old Testament believers of God's deliverance and hope and provision, had come through Christ! "For they drank from the same spiritual Rock that accompanied them, and that Rock was Christ." So the Great Builder of the universe, yes the Great Architect of the physical universe, has chosen to use His Own Son, to be that "cornerstone foundation," of His spiritual house. His church!

Friends, we've looked at this before in this series, but I humbly make no apologies for visiting it again. V7 "now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But those who do not believe, the stone

the builders rejected, has become the capstone.' Some months ago now, I spoke on 'Nothing But The Blood Of Jesus'. And I explained, that it is the most rare, the most valuable, and the most precious substance throughout the entire universe in of all eternity! Because there will never be even one more drop that will be spilled. I also explained, that each and every drop was spilled for you, and for me. Because, yes, Jesus died for his people as a whole. But there is a real sense, to which He died for each of us individually, as though we were the only one! So for those of us who believe in Him. "This stone is precious." Because He is the foundation of our faith. That foundation and that substance of our faith that should be "precious" to us.

But is He? That's the question. For me, simply knowing that in the early hours of the morning and the late hours of the night, when I'm alone with my thoughts and those things that trouble my mind as I lay there in the dark, simply knowing that God is there, is a great comfort. Knowing that God is there and ready to listen to my anguishes and anxieties and concerns, as the loving father God, is all important to me. Malachi 3:16: "Then those who feared the Lord, talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard." Psalm 145:17-18: "The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."

Yes dear friends. "The Lord is near." Like a loving, caring attentive father, he has an ear to the door of our room. And "He listens and he hears." We are "precious" to him. If we were not, would He have given of His Own Son so that He could bring us home? No! So friends, if we are "precious" to Him, then surely His Son, that 'precious cornerstone," that "Living stone," should be "precious" to us. But again, is He? That's the question!

The thought of the reality of this question struck me hard again the other night, while I was trying to yet again, get my head around the idea, that someone would give their child's life in exchange for my own, that I might live. And even that, that child, would be willing to take my place of punishment and suffering. Not only as undeserving as I am. But even while I was the sworn enemy, of both that father and his child! So as I was putting this message together, those thoughts struck me as I again read Peter and Isaiah's words. And I asked myself: Is Jesus really "precious" to me? What kind of value do I place upon that which God has done for me through His very Own Son? How can I assess that? How is my devotion, my sincerity, and my commitment wade and evidenced in my life? Not only in the spiritual, but in real and practical terms? To put it another way, how do I spend the currency of my life, for my Saviour? The currency of my time: where is it invested? Do I always have time for everyone else, but I am time poor for Jesus? My time account for prayer. Am I heavenly invested? Or am I nearing bankruptcy? The study of God's Word. Is my account full to overflowing? Or are the creditors knocking at the door? What of my ministry of love toward the brethren. Have I invested well? And finally, what of my finances? If I were to lay myself financially bare for all to see. As someone who claims to love and serve God and His Son. Claiming to have invested my eternal soul in them, Father Son and Holy Spirit, would my allocations to Him and His Work testify to the "preciousness" of His Son sacrificed for me and mine? Or would it add up to perhaps a cup of coffee per week!

Beloved, I found these thoughts both tremendously troubling and confronting. What value do I place upon my faith and my Christianity? Even my eternal soul? Yes, what does Jesus' death truly mean to me? Can I truly and sincerely confess that Jesus' Blood is "precious" to me? I don't know. I hope so. I hope that the longer I know the Lord and I hopefully come to know him better, I hope and pray, that the value of Jesus would grow in my heart, by His grace. And that the opposite doesn't take place. The opposite being familiarity, complacency, and apathy. That those things wouldn't rob me of my awe, and appreciation of God's gift to me. Even that gift of His Own Son!

Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also." Yes, v7-8: "To you who believe this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall."

The builders of Jesus' day were the Jewish religious ruling elite. They wore fine clothes. They were respected and revered by all. They were the final authority on all things spiritual, civil, and legal. They expounded and applied the Word of God, (at least as they perceived it,) to each and every day's situations. And their word was final. It was literally, law! They were looking for the great warrior Redeemer to deliver them out of Roman oppression and reinstate Israel's glory days under king David and king Solomon. So when Jesus came wearing His poor man's clothes, and His telling account of where He was from, (even hailing from that despised region of Nazareth,) and declaring, that in His appearing and his reading of the scriptures and their hearing of it, the promised Redeemer is fulfilled!

Well those finely dressed and well respected builders, the Pharisees and Sadducees and law people, yes those finely dressed and respected builders saw it as their life's calling, to stir up a murderous enmity and hatred toward God's Own in anointed Son! Luke 4:14-30 "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour". Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began by saying to them, "Today the scripture is fulfilled in your hearing". All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph son?" They asked. Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: "Physician, heal yourself. Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum". I tell you the truth", he continued, "No Prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for 3 1/2 years, and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed, only Naaman the Syrian". All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the Cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way."

Yes Jesus went and taught in the synagogue. "Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Around 1500 years since God brought the people up out of Egypt. And the rise and fall of the nation of Israel with only a small remnant left. The Redeemer comes, and everyone is overjoyed, until Jesus hits them with the reality, of their own uncleanness, in the sight of God, and that they need to be made clean of their sin. And what do they want to do with God's "precious Livingstone," "the cornerstone." The Redeemer of the church? Well of course, take Him up to the cliff and throw Him off! Yes praise God the Redeemer is here. Oh. He's not what we were looking for. He's not what we want. He's telling us the truth. Let's get rid of him. Let's kill him! Yes the builders of the day, rejected

God's eternally ordained foundation stone Of God for His church. But now, "it has become the capstone." It is that stone which determines the corner. It caps off the work. It can be the support of a great archway. With the imagery being, that it has authority over all the other parts of the building.

And not only that, but it is very foundation. So Jesus is not only the foundation, He is also the head of the church. "The alpha and the Omega." "The first and the last." "The beginning and the end." "The first born from the dead." "The pioneer and perfecter of our faith." Yes "the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone."

I heard a sermon only recently where the preacher explained that we are all builders. He explained that in the Church of Christ, (even as we are all priests,) we are all builders. Jesus and His Truth is the foundation. And all true builders, are building upon Him. Labouring toward His Kingdom rule and authority. But may I suggest that there is also the truth that, in a real sense, we are all builders whether or not we are saved. What I mean is, that throughout our lives, (and indeed our lives themselves are the building,) yes throughout our lives we are building toward heaven or hell!

Friends, unlike a legacy which is something that we leave behind, our whole life, if not covered by Jesus' Blood, is a building that we will carry with us into the presence of God, come the day of judgement! So if we reject that "precious stone." Yes if we as builders reject the foundational stone of Christ in this life, if we "stumble," in unbelief or rebellion and defiance of his gospel message of forgiveness and life, not coming to Him in repentance and confession, then He will become that Rock to us, (not of our salvation,) but that Rock that causes humanity to fall into judgement, and then cast into hell. Having rejected that One true living God's free gift of mercy through His Son!

So in closing dear friends, I in all sensitivity again ask the question: Is Jesus "precious" to you? Only you know the answer to that question. I trust that today's message would challenge you to reassess the value that you place upon your Saviour!

Let's Pray!