

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Chief

Cornerstone of our faith, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, amen.

Most of you know PJ and I love to attend Rock N Roll concerts. I've been a fan of the Rock band Pink Floyd for many years. When I read this second chapter of First Peter I couldn't resist mentioning one of their iconic songs "Another Brick In The Wall" from the album The Wall. In the late '70's, Pink Floyd came out with this hit song that school kids loved. Although the band broke up in the 1980s, Roger Waters, who wrote most of their music, toured the world playing the album, The Wall in its entirety. We saw this concert, not once but twice at the beginning of his world-wide tour in Columbus and then again toward the end in Indianapolis. As the concert progressed, the stagehands constructed a giant wall that separated the audience from the band. It was a symbol of how Roger Waters struggled with mental illness during his life. Both times we saw them they included a local children's choir to sing the chorus. "We don't need no education. We don't need no thought control... Hey teacher! Leave those kids alone... And the line... All and all you're just another brick in the wall." There's some debate concerning the last line, but I always understood it to mean if you willingly believe everything your teachers tell you, you're just another brick in the wall--a conformist who must not be very bright because you're not willing or able to think for yourself. No, students shouldn't just swallow everything that they hear from their teachers.

Here's what I mean, I had a teacher in 9th grade who used to say his job wasn't to tell us what to think, but to teach us to think for ourselves. We need more teachers like that today! Of course, there are many who will accuse you of being just another brick in the wall if you believe everything you read in the Bible – especially the claim that Jesus is the only way to heaven. Neither Christ, nor Bible-believing Christians are just another brick in the wall.

According to several house-building websites I checked, foundations are the most difficult and important part of construction. A foundation that might work in one part of the country where it is relatively dry, probably wouldn't work in another area where wet weather or poor drainage cause wet or damp soil conditions. So, if you're intent on building your own home, it's best to consult the experts before laying your foundation. Get the foundation wrong and the rest of your house is doomed because the walls and roof won't have the support the house needs to stay standing. The Apostle Peter explains the same thing is true of our eternal salvation. He quoted the prophet Isaiah in our text: The Scriptures provide precedent: Look! I'm setting a stone in Zion, a cornerstone in the place of honor. Whoever trusts in this stone as a foundation will never have cause to regret it. To you who trust him, he's a Stone to be proud of, but to those who refuse to trust him, the stone the workmen threw out is now the chief foundation stone. For the

untrusting it's . . . a stone to trip over, a boulder blocking the way. They trip and fall because they refuse to obey, just as predicted..

Many people feel their own goodness can be the foundation of their salvation. However, according to the Bible, that's like building your house on sand. Peter reminds us Jesus is not just another brick in the wall. He's not just another path up the summit of salvation or another item on the spiritual, but not religious menu. Christ is the cornerstone, the only foundation that will lift us up and make us righteous before God Almighty. Jesus himself made it clear in John's Gospel when he said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus is the only sure foundation of our salvation because he is the only one who measured up to God's standard of perfection. Trusting in ourselves or anything else is like standing on an empty cardboard box you've painted to look like a rock, thinking it will support your weight and help you reach higher heights. You can't simply step over or around Christ the Cornerstone as if he's a brick that fell off the mason's wheelbarrow. He's much bigger than that. So, don't treat Jesus like just another brick in the wall – like another guru you can choose to listen to or ignore without consequences.

While Christ is the cornerstone of God's temple, he's not the whole building. What do you suppose the rest of the temple is made out of? Marble? Gold? Listen to Peter again: ...But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the

high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted. God is building his house out of you and the Christian sitting next to you. It's no wonder he calls us stones instead of bricks. Bricks are all the same shape, size, and color. No two stones are alike, not even stones cut from the same rock. God loves this variety, bringing us together to become a dazzling mosaic designed for his glory.

This building technique is a blessing for us. I'm not very good at fixing things. So, if church maintenance was left to me, we'd have a furnace that doesn't work and doors that remain broken. Thankfully we have a few living stones here who look after those things. Likewise, you might not be gifted at sewing or making quilts, but we're blessed with several rock-solid seamstresses who enjoy making the most beautiful quilts for Lutheran World Relief. We also have some living stones who are able to help pack up the quilts for shipping and others who can help load them into vehicles, and others who can drive them to the pick-up locations. There's enough work to go around so everyone can get involved!

What gifts has God given you? How are you using them for the benefit of God's people? There are no ornamental stones in God's house... You may feel like another brick in the wall when you come to church on Sunday morning and sit there for an hour while I talk and others play the piano and organ. But you're not a

brick. You are a living stone and that's how God's people roll! Serving others for God's glory is what God made you to do! That's what I call a real Rolling Stone!

To get that point across Peter used another analogy in our text. He said we are a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices. Just as Aaron's descendants had the privilege of busying themselves in the temple offering animal sacrifices every morning and evening, God has called us to be priests who now offer spiritual instead of animal sacrifices. An example of such a sacrifice is when you willingly create delicious meals for grieving families. Sure, you would like to actually sit down and eat that great meal, but you stay in the kitchen or help serve the family until they have all been served. Then, and only then, do those who serve sit down to eat themselves. Even younger members can do something... Perhaps out of love for your family you watch your younger siblings while Mom and Dad get some yard work done. Sure, you'd like to be off playing, doing your own thing, instead you sacrifice your time to help the family. When you do it for God's glory you're being a living stone and a royal priest.

Let me make this clear. Sacrificing your time, talent, or treasure for others doesn't make you a royal priest or a living stone. You already are living stones and royal priests. How did this happen, you ask...? It wasn't because God saw anything pretty in you or me. A miner will descend into the dirty depths to retrieve diamonds because they're worth something, but when God's Son came down here

he only found worthless grit. Still, he scooped us up, sacrificing his life as he did and washing and polishing us with his blood. Just how precious are we now?

Look at what an angel showed the Apostle John in the book of Revelation. This is a symbolic description of believers. The angel said, “‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ (that’s us folks) ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal” (Revelation 21:9-11)... See, you are not just another brick in the wall! You’re a gem, a jewel, a precious living stone in God’s temple. You already shine with God’s love. Our job is to simply direct that love at others so they may see God’s brilliance and learn they too are not just another brick in the wall.

I don’t know what Pink Floyd had in mind when they sang: “All and all you’re just another brick in the wall,” but Peter’s words are clear aren’t they? Christ is the cornerstone of our salvation, and built on him Christians are living stones in God’s temple. Show off your God-given beauty this week as you praise the Rock of our salvation with your words and deeds, for Christ is never just another brick in the wall and neither are you. You are that precious gem, reflecting God’s glory, giving God the honor and the praise for his great mercy and his grace given all for you, amen.