

Good morning. The Lord bless you and give you peace. We are considering this very pastoral and rich with promises of God. Let me begin this morning by highlighting three Biblical events that must be considered as we enter into the content of our text. I will give them to you chronologically.

Event number 1. Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar. You will remember the history of Daniel. He was a young man that was expatriated to Babylon after Israel and Judah was conquered by the Babylonians. In God's providence Daniel was distinguished for his wisdom and understanding on all matters that he was presented. On one occasion we read that King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that terrified him. He demanded two things from all those in his court that were given responsibilities of counsel, first that they would tell him the dream that he had, which is crazy, and second, that they would give him the interpretation of the dream. If they would not do it, he would kill them all. You can imagine the urgency with which Daniel approached the Lord, and of course we know that God revealed the dream to Daniel and its interpretation. Daniel approaches Nebuchadnezzar and basically tells him that no one on earth can do what the king asked, but God was merciful to Daniel and revealed the dream and the interpretation to him. As an aside, the best counsel that we can give and receive is that of those who have everything to lose by telling us the truth, and still they tell us. Surround yourself with people like that and you will succeed in spades. In this event with Daniel we are concerned with the conclusion of the dream and interpretation. The king dreamed of an amazing statute that represented all the kingdoms of the world, but this statue was destroyed by this incredible rock that was hewn by a supernatural hand. The rock was thrown at that statue and it obliterated, and an eternal kingdom was established. We cannot remove Peter's teaching about Jesus Christ from the ancient teaching of God establishing His Kingdom and destroying all other kingdoms.

Event number 2. A man named Hosea was spoken to by God and began sharing all that he was told and doing all that he was told to do. God told Hosea to marry a Jewish woman who was either a prostitute or had a disposition towards sexual deviance. Commentators are really not sure how to understand what exactly played out. Either way, we know that Hosea's wife, her name was Gomer, ended up being unfaithful to Hosea. She fathered several children, and the story gives the sense that Hosea was not the father, or at least had a right to question if he was. His life with Gomer was a life that underscored the way that God was being treated by the people of Israel for their spiritual unfaithfulness. God sees the embracing of sin by His people as spiritual prostitution. But He promises in Hosea that He will work in such a way that He will speak gently with His people and bring hope where there was no hope. He would show mercy where there no mercy had been experienced, and He would say to those who were not His children, you are My People. Peter is underscoring language for the recipients of his letter that reaches back not only to God's Kingdom work, as we saw above, but it reaches back also to the rescuing of people from sin and into His Kingdom.

Event number 3. The Gospel of Luke chapter 20. Jesus is challenged by the religious leaders about why He would throw everyone out of the Temple who was conducting prayer. Jesus teaches many things in that section, but two of the most important are that His Father's house should be called a house of prayer, meaning it has always been meant to be a place to commune with God, and secondly, that the people who were given to steward His house would be destroyed if they did not accept the chief foundation of this means of communing with God, which is Jesus.

These three events are pulled from in Peter's teaching to give hope to those Christians that were going through trials. God is establishing His Kingdom in Christ that will not only outlast all the kingdoms of the world but destroy them. Just think of the teaching in Psalm chapter 2. But those that take refuge in Him will be blessed. Not only is God establishing a Kingdom, but these Christians who are now trying to figure out where their place is in the world that is so hostile towards them for their faith, these Christians can rest in the knowledge that those who were not recipients of mercy and could not call God their God are now His people, His chosen priesthood. How can this be true? It is true because God has ordered His house. He has destroyed those evil stewards and His Son has been

clearly seen as the foundation, the cornerstone who has brought justice to bear upon the world. Now these people are found in Him as members of the Zion of God.

Let's take a moment to see how this is taught by Peter.

First consider the **concept of "the Rock"** that is mentioned here.

I am considering **verses 6-8**. Last week we considered the importance of Jesus as the foundation of our Christian calling and experience. He is the cornerstone. What we lose in English is the play on words surrounding "cornerstone." Here is how it lays out in the Greek.

"**I am laying in Zion a stone.**" The first word for stone that is used is the Greek word **lythos**. It is just a **general term** for the object that we call a **stone**, or if the context and an adjective modify it, of a **building stone**, which is what happens here. So **literally** in Greek it reads, "I lay in Zion a **stone corner**," a **lythos akroyoniaion**. Peter then goes on to underscore *the selection process* that God takes in picking and laying this stone. It is chosen and precious.

In **verse 7** Peter quotes from **Psalms 118:22** which demonstrates that God has not only been building for quite some time, but mercifully warning people for some time. We live almost at the bottom of hill on a dead-end street. When you turn on our street there is a sign that says, "no outlet," but it is often ignored or not seen. One evening we paused what we were doing because we heard the roar of an engine flying down our street and then the screech of tires trying to come to a stop, added to tires squealing back up the street. When it was light enough the next day, we pieced together what happened based upon rubber that was now painted onto the last couple feet of the pavement, and the newly plowed grass on our yard. Whoever it was stood on the breaks when the saw the road come to an end, and then pitched it into our yard when they say they were going to end up as a decoration on a bunch of trees. They ignored the warning sign, they ignored the speed limit, and they ignored the time of day which minimized visibility. They almost did some serious damage to their vehicle. God has been warning people of disbelief from the time of Cain until now.

Here is **the warning**, for those that disbelieve, Jesus is **not only the foundation stone**, the cornerstone, **the lythos akroyoniaion**, He is the "**kephaleen gonias**," the **head of the corner**. Jesus is the capstone of the building of God. I wish the ESV would have done a better job bringing that out because it underscores an incredible amount of theological currents in the Bible. It ties into Paul's declaration of **Christ's exaltation** in **Philippians 2**, and **Colossians 1**, and it ties into the author of **Hebrew's** teaching about Christ being **the final Word** from God who is better than angels, Moses, the Levitical priesthood, and the greatest of all Kings. He is the **Alpha** and the **Omega**, the **first** and the **last**, the **beginning** and the **end**, the **agent** of creation and the **center** of creation, the **agent** of salvation and the **goal** of salvation. He is **mighty God**, **Emanuel**, **God with us**. He is the **firstborn from the dead**. **From Him, and to Him, and for Him are all things, so to Him be glory in the Church, both now and forever, amen!**

Jesus is the ROCK. Consider **secondly**, "**the warnings and authority in relationship to the Rock.**" Jesus Christ is all those things. But **verse 8** also tells us what He is for those who reject Him. Notice how Peter lays this out for us to see. Jesus is the **lythos akroyoniaion**, **stone corner**, the **kephaleen gonias**, **head of the corner**, which is grammatically and contextually modified by lythos, stone. But here in **verse 8** Jesus is a "**lythos proskommatos**," **stone of stumbling**, and a "**petra skandalou**," a **rock of offense**. The word for offense is the word from which we get the word scandal in English, and if you have a little savvy with names, the word **petra** is the same word for **Peter**.

One commentator notes well, "**Ironically, Peter himself (the rock) was accused by Jesus of being a skandalon when Peter rebuked Jesus and attempted to deflect him from his predicted road to rejection and death (Matt.16:23). Peter had become an occasion for Jesus to sin, a temptation that Jesus vigorously overcame by his sharp rebuke of Peter's thought. Here in 1 Pet. 2:8 Peter claims that Christ the cornerstone presents an opportunity either for trust or rejection.**" (k Jobs, Baker 2005, 153) *I would remind us again that if there were ever a time when Peter should*

have underscored what the Roman Catholic Church teaches about Peter's authority as the primary apostle and first pope, it should have been here where he could distinguish himself as the rock that Jesus identified in the gospels. Rather, Peter underscores language that is a play on words with his name and experience in the negative sense, all because Jesus is the only stone we should be honoring.

But let's consider the **emphasis that Peter parks on**, that of giving a **reason for the disobedience of people** to the word of God. Notice the phrase, "**as they were destined to do.**"

This is certainly a difficult concept to work through. **If we are destined to something does it mean that Gods actively directs us to disobedience?** We have to be governed by the text and the broader scriptural teaching. Several things are important to remember here.

First, Peter is underscoring the blessing of the Christian hope for Christians that are going through severe trials. It is an encouragement to know that even the unbelief of people who were causing this persecution fits into this plan of salvation. Paul says that all things work together for God to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Further, Peter has already used language to underscore the prominent work of God in blessing them. They are *elect* exiles. Their election is compared to the election of Christ for His work of redemption because God's the Father's foreknowledge directs both. Also, it is contrasted with the God's choosing (**2:8 and 9a**), which for these who were suffering under the hands of unbelievers would have reminded them that ultimately, we they would never have to worry about these people again. God's Kingdom will crush the kingdoms of this world.

Secondly, Peter's teaching is the *fruit of Christ's teaching*. Remember the teaching of Jesus in **John 3:16-18**. The verses appeal to belief and warn that **everyone outside of Christ is already on a road to perdition because we are sinners, not because God made us sinners**. Peter is not saying more than what Christ is saying.

Thirdly, however much we want these tensions resolved, the scripture is not given to clarify it for us. Paul deals with these kinds of things in **Romans 9** and strikes down the rebuttal from some that God could not hold anyone accountable if Paul's teaching about God's sovereign work in salvation is upheld. **Paul's reply** is not to give us a theological treatise on the philosophical and theological harmony in what seems like dissonance. Paul simply asks the question, "*who do you think you are in questioning God?*" I believe God has purposefully left these issues before us to test our humility in recognizing that there is an end to our comprehension of His plan, and to test if we will be faithful to proclaim His authority and sovereignty in all things, while being faithful to call all men to repentance and display the mission focused life of Jesus Christ Himself upon this world.

I will give you **one help that has helped me in holding these two paths**. As a hermeneutical tool please remember that the scriptures speak of **two perspectives**, that of **God looking down upon us**, and **us looking up towards God**. We will make **statements that are commensurate with our perspective**. That is the example of scripture, and that is the example in this text. It's what God does and what we do with it that Peter is getting to. Are you going to be crushed by this stone because of your hatred of God, or will you by your surrender to Christ allow God to build you into something incomprehensible in glory and beauty?

Finally, "**the consequence and blessing of the Rock.**" Peter highlights for the readers of his epistle some major things that salvation means for the Christian. **First the positive**. We are a **chosen race**. Biblically speaking, in God's economy of race, there are those who reject Him and those who embrace Him. We are all equal in our need for Him irrespective of our physical ethnicities. Within that race we understand that the whole chosen race is set apart for ministering as priests before God, and worshipping as only priests could, constantly in the presence of God. Further, Peter notes that we are a **holy nation**. That is that we are **set apart for God and made holy to be like God**. But there is more, Peter notes that we **belong to God so that we might declare His glory**. We are those who were in darkness but not have been found in God's light. We were those who had no community as a people, but now have community with God. We were those who had not been exposed to the mercy of God, we had not received God's mercy, but now that mercy is not only proclaimed to us, but it belongs to us.

Oh, my friends, think about who Peter is speaking to. These people had lost so much in becoming Christians, and their Christianity was the cause of their fiery trials. Peter understood what this was like. He was a Jew, but his commitment to Jesus Christ had occasioned the experience of being rejected by his own people, not to mention being imprisoned for the sake of being a Christian. When we truly start to live as Christians, and the world's philosophies and ideologies and tolerances more and more turn away from Christianity, then we will know what these men and women were experiencing. We will apprehend with more joy the teaching of Peter.

But one thing must be consistent, we must reflect the transforming power of God in our lives. We are to abstain from the passions of the flesh. That means we don't participate or engage in the pursuit and enjoyment of things in this world that we know dishonor God. What kinds of things are these? Well, they are those things that war against my soul. **Whatever leads me to sin is the thing I am to abstain from, avoid, remove from my life.**

More positively, I am to make sure that my manner of life is so above board before God, Peter uses the word **honorable**, that the gentiles, that is, those who do not believe, which by the way makes for some incredible theological points about who is true Israel and who are true gentiles, my manner is to be so honorable that those who do not believe that what they say we do does not match what they know we do. One day they will acknowledge those true and honorable things, but they will do so in the presence of God when they must stand before Him.

Just think of that as you bear up under the cross that God has laid upon you in this world. Being a faithful husband or wife to an unbelieving spouse will result in the declaration of your faithfulness in heaven. Being a faithful Christian in your workplace, though overlooked, will result in the declaration of your good deeds before God. I remember being in difficult seasons in my life as an employee. I can't tell you how often God would give me a glimpse of this when things were going rather difficult with supervisors or other workers. I would happen to find myself with my boss and a client, and the client would just start telling my boss about things that I had done to help fulfill our responsibilities. It was so encouraging. It was those moments where you would say, God's got this. Oh, dear friends, **how much more glorious will that day be when those things we have done to honor God will be magnified by those who treated us with contempt on this earth?** If you are in a season of hardship, just stay faithful. God will bring your righteousness to light. If you are in a season of insecurity, remember that you are being build up on a rock that will not be moved, and the capstone of this building is the one who loved you so much He gave His life for you.

I gave them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand! John 10:28 Amen.