

A Cornerstone and Living Stones (Gather no moss)

1 Peter 2:1-10

Everton Hills

14 May 2017

In the late '70's, Pink Floyd's "**Another brick in the wall**" was somewhat controversial. The chorus, sung by a school choir, included lyrics like "We don't need no education. We don't need no thought control...Hey teacher! Leave those kids alone...All and all you're just another brick in the wall."

The song, which is really a protest song against the then rigid UK schooling and boarding system was basically saying '**don't be a conformist**', '**think for yourself**', '**don't believe everything your teachers tell you**', 'you're not just another brick in the wall'.

I like that. Personally, sometimes I think that we don't always think about what we are learning. We tend to be conformist. We seek out people who believe that same stuff we do... and what that can do is simply reinforce our biases. I remember my dad telling me not to simply read books on Lutheran theology... "challenge yourself", he would say "and know what it is that you really believe".

So this morning, I want to sort of pick that theme up... to challenge you, and get you to think about what you really believe!

Why, because Christians are not meant to be just another brick in the wall!

There are Christians who think that! Who think that we all must be the same. We must be uniform. We can't celebrate our differences!

And there are those who think that Christians simply follow some ancient religion that has no real relevance to life as we know it today.

And both are wrong! Neither get the fact that the God that the Christians follow is a God of ongoing creation... He continues to create new things and new thoughts in our world today. And so when we engage in the action of creation, there should be no such thing as a staid, boring, irrelevant faith. If there is... then we need to ask ourselves what faith do we follow.

Today, I am going to unpack what Peter had to say about another brick in a wall, although he doesn't call it a brick, he calls it **a cornerstone**. And I am going to also talk about some other stones – which he calls **living stones**.

A living cornerstone and a living stone. And that is good. Because those of you who grew up in the age of rock and roll know that "rolling stones gather no moss".

Peter begins by letting us know who it is that he is writing to...

***"I am writing to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia."* (1 Peter 1:1, NLT)**

Now these provinces of the Roman empire were more like **Roman colonial outposts**. That's how the Roman emperor Claudius colonized Asia Minor. He deported noncitizens into foreign lands. Indeed, the legal meaning of the word foreigner in 1 Peter, actually means a free person who is not a Roman citizen.

Now to qualify for such deportation, one only needed to be considered as someone who refused to simply be another brick in the wall. Does that make sense? If you were a little bit different, who you didn't quite fit in, if you were thought to be a subversive... like a Christian convert in ancient times... then you qualified. So those early Christians often found themselves in distant outposts. And it is these people that Peter calls 'living stones'. But hold that thought.

Because before Peter talks about living stones, he talks about a corner stone.

“You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God’s temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor.” (1 Peter 2:4, NLT)

We don't think so much in terms of cornerstones, these days. So I've brought one! (Well, imagine it is one).

In ancient building practices, the cornerstone was the most important stone. The cornerstone was the stone that was set that would determine position of the entire structure! If the stone was out a bit, then walls would go wonky – and they might not even join up... and the structure itself would be unstable! So stonemasons would spend a long time carefully chipping and shaping the cornerstone so that the building itself would be strong!

Notice what Peter says about Jesus the cornerstone...

“I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” (1 Peter 2:6, NLT)

Peter reminds us that Jesus is not 'just' another brick in the wall. He is foundational to the wall. And anyone who builds him or herself off that that cornerstone 'will never be disgraced'. In other words, He is the stone by which the entire building takes its shape.

What I find fascinating about that, is that if we are faithful to building our lives off the living cornerstone of Jesus, and if we are creative people (as God indeed declares us to be), then how can we ever be boring. How can creativity ever be boring!

Do you follow?

If we consider Jesus to be the revolutionary, the subversive, the one who stands in stark contrast to the excesses of this world, and we creatively build our lives off that belief, shouldn't that create the sort abundant life, to which Jesus refers in John 10:10. And conversely the opposite is true. When we live that way, those who don't get it, who want to be 'like everybody else' may well and truly feel a little uncomfortable.

You see Jesus' message, which should bring discomfort to the world, speaks of a counter-cultural understanding of hope and mercy, of grace and forgiveness, of acceptance and love. It's counter-cultural, because people around us talk about 'survival of the fittest', 'greed is good', 'forgiveness is bad', 'showing mercy is for the weak'. And if you know anything about the people who followed Jesus, when they encountered him, they moved from being violent revolutionaries and opinionated zealots to being people of love and grace and mercy.

And it is to those people, that Peter says... ***“you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What’s more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God.” (1 Peter 2:5, NLT)***

Hear that carefully. What Peter shares are identity words. They are words that declare that no matter how you feel about yourself, about your abilities, about your past, or even your future, you already are living stones, the sort of which God is using to build his spiritual temple.

What I love about being called a living stone is that no two stones are alike. Not even two stones that are cut from the same rock.

What I love about that is that God uses the mishmash of individuals, with all our quirks, all our problems, all our flaws, all our obsessions, all our sins, and he uses them to build his spiritual temple. **God made you the way that you are – with your flaws... because he delights in your variety – and he wants to bless others through that variety.**

Man, I'm thankful for that. Can you imagine what it would be like if we were all **just another brick in the wall**? Life would be boring. Lifeless. Colourless.

But that is not who God uses to build his temple.

He uses people who can hold a tune. And those who can't.

He uses those who know how to listen. And those who can't seem to shut up.

He uses those whose life has always seemed to be together. As well as those whose life at times has been so messed up that they think they can never be normal – whatever normal is!

And he brings us all together, as living stones to create something wonderful!

What's more, Peter says, is that it is not what you can contribute, that makes you unique, precious, and valuable. It is what God has done for you in Jesus. You are not just another brick in the wall! You are a gem, a jewel, a precious living stone, no matter how flawed, but playing an important role in God's temple.

This is the point. It is as we recognise ourselves in that light that we are able to accept ourselves and our history (no matter how good or bad it might be) and allow God build something amazing through us.

May you rock on, and be the revolutionary change our world needs... be grace, love, forgiveness and mercy.