

Jesus Christ Is Precious Unto You Which Believe

A Reflection on 1 Peter 2:4-7 and Our Spiritual Foundation

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If you have your Bible, go ahead and turn to 1 Peter, and we're going to go into chapter 2 to continue our First Peter series. I'm going to go back to verses 4 and 5 briefly to accentuate some main points from those verses. First, I want to share that the Apostle Peter deals with the Christian church rather than the Christian individual. Everything that has led up to this verse 4, we have been dealing with the individual believer. Now we're dealing with the Christian church. How do believers work together in this body represented as the church? One thing in the New Testament is the emphasis that focuses on spiritual worship of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ rather than a physical temple and sacrificial rituals. We don't have that anymore. I'll explain where that transition happened.

I want to go back to Matthew 16:18, where Jesus said this to Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." If you look at the original Greek, it's put this way: "Thou art Petros, a little piece of rock, and upon this Petra, bedrock, I will build my church." That word "bedrock" is important. It means the main foundation, the solid foundation. Who is that? Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ. When did it happen that He would be the solid foundation? It began starting with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We see this in 1 Peter. Look down with me, 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 21, and just taking that phrase, "that raised Him up from the dead." God raised Jesus up from the dead and gave Him glory, and that our faith, belief, and hope might be in God. I'm bringing that verse out because it'll explain more where I'm going a little bit more.

1 Corinthians 3:11, I gave this verse as well last Sunday: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Christ is the stone. Christ is the foundation. He says, "On this rock, He will build His church." This word "disallowed indeed of men," you see that phrase in verse 4. A little bit about this, Peter's saying here it's referencing what he remembers from what Jesus said. Just like Jesus would be rejected, we are rejected, aren't we? It's not the main reference to Scripture that this is saying, but just listen to what Jesus says: "Remember the word that I said unto you. The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." John 15:20. So, just as He is rejected, we are rejected, because simply for being a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I'm talking about lost men and women, they will reject us just simply because we are believers, followers of the Lord.

He is risen from the dead, verse 21, and hence He is the living stone that we see here in verse 4, right? A living stone, the foundation of God's new temple. We're leaving the old covenant. How did it end? It was the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70. It's the end of the covenant and its sacrificial system, marking the transition to the new covenant through Christ. Peter makes the one help and understanding of the other. The Christian church is like a new temple built up from its very first foundation stone.

Another thing I want us to look at is a holy priesthood. The late John MacArthur puts it like this: Old Testament priests and New Testament believers, we share a number of characteristics and privileges of a priest. The main privilege of a priest is that we have access to God. We can access Him directly. Why? Because Jesus removed the veil for us, amen. We can enter in, and now we can offer up spiritual sacrifices just like the priest does. Now we go into the spiritual sacrifices, which is God-honoring, what's done because of what Christ has done under direction of the Holy Spirit given to us as believers and with the guidance of His Word. I brought out some of the things: we can offer up the strength of one's body to God, that's Romans 12:1; praising God, Hebrews 13:15; doing good, Hebrews 13:16; sharing one's resources, Hebrews 13:16; bringing people to the Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 15:16; sacrificing one's desires for the good of others, Ephesians 5:2; and lastly, prayers, Revelation 8:3.

How do we become priests? Well, because we have one great high priest. It's found in Hebrews 4:14: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into heavens, Jesus the Son of God." Let us hold fast our profession that we are called priests because He's our main priest, and He is the one that gives us this wonderful access to God.

I did speak about the spiritual house, and I mentioned this is representing the church in this new covenant that we live in under. What are the sacrifices that this spiritual house, priesthood as priests, brings to God? Peter doesn't specifically explain what it is, but he says something very interesting. You'll see in verses 14 and 16 of chapter 1. Just look briefly with me. He says that a believer is to live holy lives, separated lives unto God, right? These are spiritual holy lives, spiritual sacrifices.

The spiritual house, let's look at it from the bottom up briefly. Foundation. I mentioned 1 Corinthians 3:11: there is no other foundation except Jesus Christ. What does that mean? Well, it's everything that He said, everything that He's done, everything that He's taught, the way He suffered. The Lord Jesus Christ is the spiritual house. Because the spiritual is the range of Christ, right? Mention His thoughts, what He did, how He even felt, how He taught, all these spiritual things which this spiritual house is reared.

Then we see the living stones of the building, we see that in verse 5, right? Living stones. What does that mean? It means, essentially, spiritual men. We're born of God. We received, and we can receive communion with God through the spiritual life as men that are spiritual, and we can be transformed into Christlikeness more and more into His likeness. That's the spiritual life. In order to be more like Christ, we must constantly hear from His Word, right? In the stones of the building, it must be of the same nature of the foundation.

It's very difficult to understand because we live in the Western world, but the Eastern mind delights in using metaphors, and in this one, living stone, it's a mixed metaphor, living and stone,

right? How do you reconcile that with the Western mind? We've got to think, how does the Eastern mind think? We have life, the living part that gives life, the spiritual, the eternal, right? Jesus is spiritual, eternal, and everyone who trusts has that same right part essence as Him. But then we have to see the other side, which is a stone, which is what? Hard, cold, rigid, totally different, isn't it? It's a mixed metaphor.

We see Jesus' high priestly prayer. Look at what He says: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word," John 17:20-21, "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Perfect in one. Look at it, building block by stone, block by block, that oneness, right? Stacked upon each other, it's representing what Jesus prayed here. A building is a perfect example of that oneness, a foundation, and then all the blocks being built up, and they all, in essence, are one, right? You take out one piece, you know the difference, but when it's all put together, it's seamless. That's the idea of the living and the stone and that mixed metaphor.

What comes out from this building? It's a service, a spiritual service. That sacrifice that was once done in the material temple, the heart is still the same in that we give it our all. I illustrated that last time with the burnt offering. As you recall, the burnt offering was the giving of a man's whole self to God, represented by the giving of an entire animal. Interesting enough, what are we to do as our spiritual sacrifice? To give our bodies? Do we give up one part of our body, our hand only, or do we give the whole body, the whole self? There's connection after connection of the old and new covenant that we are given the illustration.

Here's where I want to use a transition. Look down with me at verse 4, where it says, "Chosen of God and precious." What does that mean? It means that God exalts the Lord. He is honorable above all. That's what that word "precious" means, to be honorable and then to be chosen of God, of all delighting God, delighting in His Son, precious above all. He's to be exalted. The Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's now go into verse 7, because now we're going to go from how God sees Jesus to how we are to see Jesus, and it's all in that word "precious." God sees Jesus as precious, and then we see Him as precious. Verse 7: "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner." We see here, right there in verse 7, speaking to us as believers. We see, therefore, similarly as God sees Jesus. He is, present tense, we believe He is precious. He is honorable of all. Is that how we live? Is that how you live, where you honor Him above everyone, even your own parents? If you are living with your parents, that you honor Him above your own wife or your own husband, that you honor Him above your work, above ministry, above everything that you do? He is to be exalted above everything. Order is important to God, and He wants to order our lives in the same manner.

How do we see Jesus compared to everything else, that relationship and all? Because in the same verse, there's that change of "but unto who." There's two types of groups: one, we see Jesus above everything; another sees Him as of no value, total contrast. We've been seeing in Peter the contrast, contrast after contrast, in how people see Jesus Christ. Let's now turn to that. Let's look

at the disobedient. What is the essence of why they don't see Jesus as precious? Unbelief. That's the root problem of all unbelievers. They don't believe Jesus is precious; therefore, they are disobedient, and then here's where it comes out in the actions: it's total rebellion. "I don't want to listen to Him. I don't want to listen to His Word." Is that your attitude, your heart posture tonight, as you're listening, if you are an unbeliever here? Because it starts with His words, and how you value His words, you will value Him as a person. I preached a sermon about you can't remove the person from His words, right? It's very important to hear who He is in the Scriptures, how He is represented. Do you trust yourself, or do you trust how God values Him?

At the end of the day, it's the heart of unbelief. You don't believe God. "Disallowed," it's the idea that you see Him as just as everything else in life. There's no comparison. He's just like anything else in life. You don't distinguish Him as honorable. You don't know where to put Him because you don't see it the way God sees it. You have to see it from His perspective. You'll never be able to see Jesus from your perspective. It has to come from God. God must reveal it to you. Otherwise, you will always see through your own lens, unworthy. But once you get a glimpse of how God sees Him, it changes everything. It changes your whole perspective.

He uses this word, this very strong word, to show, just as strongly as "precious" and "valuable" is, as strong as being "disobedient." Two very big contrasting words. Then he puts in here, "head of the corner." We saw that back in verse 6, where it said He is the chief cornerstone, Jesus, same idea. Head of the corner is put in the most honorable position; that's what a chief cornerstone is, another metaphor. He's just emphasizing what He already repeated in verse 6, which is in Isaiah 28:16. Emphasis is important, repetition is important, you'll find in Peter's writings.

Note here, Peter was not writing of the first coming of the soul to Christ with the burden of sin, the coming for forgiveness and renewal, but of the coming of the believer when he proposes to make the endeavor to build a godly life, which God shows. It's all of God. He shows that this foundation is worthy to be built upon because it's rock, it's a bedrock, solid foundation, so we can offer up from this point of view and this perspective. Christ is the foundation of our hope. He is the foundation then of our character. All of our actions come out because of Him, Him alone. He gives us His Spirit so that we can do what's acceptable to God. It's all of Him.

Let me take out a verse from Matthew 7:24-27. Essentially this: how you build upon the rock. That touches home because it's talking about your life. How does it look like in your character? There's one illustration He gives when you build your character on sand. Have you ever thought your life built on just nothing? Not even sand. Before He even mentions about sand, just think about people's lives that just have no ground, just no bearing. Have you ever met people like that? It looks like this: they're just constantly swaying by everything that's going on in the culture. It seems like one culture, one fad, they're just going and repeating and repeating. When does it end? When one problem comes up, you notice these kind of people, they're just like, "I can't handle it." But you haven't even experienced any pain. "No, I can't handle it." Problems, they can't even handle the smallest tinge of it because there's moving so much in their lives.

What about the one that's living on the sand? This person is self-absorbed, resolved to live by his own wisdom, and thinks that it's solid because at least there's a ground there. As one commentary puts it, it's fair when the summer rains come, but it's undermined by the winter floods that surge underneath. You might be able to take in a few hits, not like the first person. "I

can take some pain,” but when it goes deep, when you can’t weather it, as it were, when it comes underneath you and sweeps you underneath, it’s over for you. You thought you had a foundation, but you actually did not. You can’t really, ultimately, endure the afflictions, the real afflictions that a believer experiences, the hardships.

Look at the follower of Jesus, the one that builds his character, his life upon the rock of Christ. When you put Him as your foundation, when you grasp what you have in Christ, it’s no longer in the sense, “Oh, here I am as a natural man,” and you’re thinking about how the natural man lives their lives. You think beyond the natural. It doesn’t matter who you might think about. The greatest of greatest, the wisest of wisest, the most brilliant person, the strongest person physically. You can name anybody in strength and wisdom. To you, it doesn’t matter, because all of them will die. All of them will fail. All of them will lose their mind one day. But whose mind is continual? Whose strength lasts? Who lives for eternity? That’s the Lord Jesus Christ. You believe Him. You are resting on Him. He doesn’t change yesterday, today, and forever. When you take that to its full honor, as it were, you honor Him in every aspect of life. Then nothing really sways you, does it? You can endure the hardest amount of hardship. No matter what you go through, He’s there. He never leaves you nor forsakes you, as the Word of God says. That’s the promise that we hold, and He holds us. He is the chief cornerstone. He alone can bear the full weight of the building, as it were, because of who He is. He provides this to every believer. There’s no special stone, right? It’s just stone. It’s who we are built upon that matters. Amen.

I gave a sermon a while ago about the psalm. Remember that? It’s just a man. But who is the man that we’re hearing from? Who’s the one, the man that we look to, the Lord Jesus Christ? It’s because of Him that we can live. Just like here, because He is the main stone, the chief cornerstone, we are built on a solid foundation. That’s how we are to think. That’s how we are to live as believers. Jesus Christ is precious. He’s the tried stone. He’s the precious stone.

Here, Peter continues to point out of this foundation that’s available to all that believe in Him. As I mentioned, various tests that every believer experiences. Continuing on, let’s look at now the three points that I want to share, and it’s the title of my sermon: Jesus Christ is precious unto you which believe. First, Jesus Christ is precious unto you which believe by distinguishing between truth and error. It is not the chief importance to ask, “Have you believed unto the salvation of your soul?” But rather, what’s more searching and what’s more important to ask is this: Are you believing unto the sanctification of your whole life and relationships in the Lord Jesus Christ? Is He the one that’s progressively changing your life into His image, into His Christlikeness, and then how He is the one taking care of all the other relationships in your life? That’s the question.

To discern this, I want us to look at Isaiah 53:4-5. You can turn there if you like. Let me just read some for you. It starts off with this: “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” This word “esteem Him stricken” means that He bore the sins and suffered for us. That’s true to us as believers. Second, “smitten” means Jesus became sin for us and was our substitute on the cross. That is truth that we believe in. Third, in that verse, “the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.” Jesus suffered the consequences of our sins, specifically the punishment and discipline that was meant to bring us peace with God. This also

we believe as precious. These are all verified truths that we know have happened in our lives that separate us from all error, from all error of how people view Jesus.

That's something to be thankful for, of what Jesus has done in our lives. It's this daily work of faith, of believing these truths. It's not us that quickens it. It's God's quickening power to give us this life to understand what Jesus truly means to us, and we can count Him as precious.

Continuing, the man who believes in Jesus finds himself possessed of this unexpected ability to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and enables us to discern more and more of the preciousness of Jesus. Do you recount in your life, this does just come to you? Not that you try to work yourself up, but it just comes to you. That's God. That's God's power in your life, that He reminds you over and over again of how precious Jesus is. Again, because He sees Him precious, we see Him precious. Amen.

Second, Jesus Christ is precious unto you which believe by your enjoyment of Him. By your enjoyment of Him, we find our greatest pleasure and even ever higher, nobler, and more pure things. That's where we go to when we are in a good place. When God is working in our lives, we think of higher, nobler, more pure things, and we find satisfaction in those things. The mere material ceases to satisfy our souls, and the spiritual proves to be ever-increasing enjoyment. That's another way we see Jesus as precious because God wants us to enjoy Him. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, what is the chief end of man? To glorify Him and to enjoy Him forever. Why? Because God wants us not only to pursue Him as the end of ultimate enjoyment, but any possessions, material possessions, are just temporary. We look beyond that in our pursuits and our possessions in the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't change in who we value the most.

We began as unbelievers, pleasures in things, but we advanced as believers beyond things, beyond pursuing things, to pleasuring truth. That is truth in the Lord Jesus Christ. His life, be attended, be apprehended. The very highest pleasure is when we find our joy in God. Isaiah 53:2 said this: "No beauty that they should desire Him," but we find beauty in Him. Amen. We find beauty in Him. That's our Lord Jesus Christ. Ask yourself, am I personally enjoying Christ? Is God constantly showing me to enjoy Christ above all? Does He fully satisfy you? Not for just a mere moment, but you just sense His full satisfaction in you. Do you love Him so much that you find rest in Him? You know, when you love somebody, you find rest. You're not searching for anymore anywhere. Husbands, wives, when you have found in this temporal world the one that you've been married to, you stop looking for someone else. Amen. It's the same idea, but in a greater way, manifestation in Jesus. We found Jesus. We found our Savior. We found our Lord. There is no more other saviors. There is no other ones that we are to worship and entrust our lives. Does that come to your attention over and over and over again? That's God doing that. Find joy in that.

Lastly, point three, Jesus Christ is precious unto you which believe by how you respond to Him. It is not that He only sees the truth, us all. It is not that we only enjoy His presence. It is that He in us meets Him, and then we answer to Him. You're receiving all these things, but He wants us to say something to Him. Amen. He wants to hear from us. That's the idea of this preciousness. Do you precious Him? Do you see Him as the most precious in the way you speak to Him? It's not enough to just receive and receive and receive, but it's also important to give back to Him a

spiritual sacrifice. Do you praise Him? Do you thank Him? Do you give Him the glory that He deserves? If you are continuing, I'm reminding you, if you have been doing it, do it more. Do it more. Of course, genuinely, but do it more. He wants to hear from you, and He delights in hearing from you. I love this dynamic relationship that we have with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me just tell you, I'm going to conclude with verse 8. I must speak about those that don't see this, and the text brings it out again, another contrasting verse: "And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." Think of Pharaoh. Remember the story of Pharaoh. He was hardening his heart, hardening his heart, hardening his heart. But ultimately, who hardened his heart? It was God. Pastor Walter mentioned this earlier in his morning. This is not our universe. This is not the way we built this world. It's all God. He can do whatever He wants, and He does do whatever He wants. He doesn't ask for our opinions. When He says He appoints, I take it. He does what He wants to do. We have to believe in faith that what He says is true. It's true. Do you take it as that? Does He have the last word? He must have the last word.

Of course, I don't want anyone to stumble. But if God is speaking to you, and you are listening to the Word, then you don't fit in this category. Suddenly, the Word of God is penetrating you, and you don't want to disobey His Word anymore. You want to listen. That's God. The ability to hear. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, Romans 10:17. Who gave you that faith? It's God to allow you to hear His Word. Where do you stand? Life is either yes or yes, or no or no. Do you want to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or do you say no again tonight? Because, let me tell you, leading up to this verse, I want you to see the impact of where we are right now in 1 Peter. Look at how many times the word "precious" has been used: 1 Peter 1:7, 1 Peter 1:19, 1 Peter 2:4, 1 Peter 2:6, 1 Peter 2:7. Multiple amount of times of God's mercy, of God's grace, and on that point, on grace, look at how many times grace has been used. It started with verse 2: "Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied." Remember when I preached that? Look at how many times "grace unto you" has appeared since then: 1 Peter 1:10, 1 Peter 1:12, 1 Peter 1:13, 1 Peter 1:25, 1 Peter 2:7, ending with, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious."

I hope and pray that you see how much grace has been multiplied, how much His preciousness has been mentioned by Peter, because that's a loving person when He repeats Himself over and over again and then tells you what is important to you by that repetition. May you take on these words, if you are the believer, and as well as the unbeliever. Take the full brunt of it. Receive it and understand God's Word does not return void. I pray that you will receive His Word in greater and greater intensity, greater and greater amount of appreciation, because that is God's will for us.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for bestowing upon us so much from Your Word. Thank You, Lord, for this opportunity to preach from Your Word. Lord, I just pray for the correct heart posture of two groups that Your text speaks to. As heavy as it is on one side, how light of a burden it is on another. We all owe it to You. It is Your doing, Father. It's for us to receive it and to believe it. It's You that empowers us to believe it. Help us, Father. Grant to us more understanding of Your grace, more understanding of the preciousness of Jesus. Grant to us this, Father, tonight. I pray, Father, for strengthening of believers, Lord, whatever they may be going through, that they would know, and this constant reminder of how much grace is continually poured upon them,

and it's received by what Jesus Christ does in us through His Spirit. I pray, Father, for those that are lost here as well, that they may be quickened, Lord, by Your Spirit, that they may see Your truth. Father, I pray that You would open up their hearts. Help them to receive Your Word. Please, Father, grant salvation as You see fit, because You are a gracious God. You're a merciful God. We trust You, Father, for providing the results that only You can do, which is change a non-believer to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, please do this. We'll thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.