

1 Peter 2:2-10 - 7th after Pentecost. *Being built up as God's chosen People!*

² You must crave pure spiritual milk so that you can grow into the fullness of your salvation. Cry out for this nourishment as a baby cries for milk, ³ now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness.

⁴ Come to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by the people, but he is precious to God who chose him.

⁵ And now God is building you, as living stones, into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are God's holy priests, who offer the spiritual sacrifices that please him because of Jesus Christ. ⁶ As the Scriptures express it, "I am placing a stone in Jerusalem, a chosen cornerstone, and anyone who believes in him will never be disappointed."

⁷ Yes, he is very precious to you who believe. But for those who reject him, "The stone that was rejected by the builders has now become the cornerstone."

⁸ And the Scriptures also say, "He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that will make them fall."

They stumble because they do not listen to God's word or obey it, and so they meet the fate that has been planned for them.

⁹ But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

¹⁰ "Once you were not a people; now you are the people of God. Once you received none of God's mercy; now you have received his mercy." [NLT]

In the past years there has been a building boom - one that has been especially noted here in Durban, where not too long ago the building industry was in a slump. Everywhere buildings have been erected, and together with the building of new stadiums for 2010 with the World Cup, there has been a shortage of trained people in the building industry.

One may wonder, whether these buildings will stand the test of time. Have they not been set up in such a hurry, starting with the foundation phase, that not enough time has been allowed to build a stable house? That after all, is what people are hoping for - a stable house, in which cracks won't start appearing a few weeks after you have moved in.

Our passage also speaks of a process of building, of the fact that we are *being built up as God's chosen People!*

Erecting a building - especially one which is to be stable - one has to pay attention

to how you build, to having a good foundation, to laying a cornerstone that will not shift. Peter uses this imagery here, to show us that we are not just to build our lives anywhere - that we are not to satisfy our cravings for life by taking on board all kinds of ideas and teachings, which may at first reflect what we want right now, but which will not stand the test of time.

As people chosen by God, we have been built onto a foundation which was laid by Christ himself. Some passages in the Bible refer to Christ being the foundation of this new building. Peter speaks of Christ here as the cornerstone - the stone on whom this entire building rests. The intention of this image is clear: More even than in building terms, we can't do without Jesus Christ to hold us up as his church.

Our thinking, our planning, is based on the fact that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and was raised to give us new life. That is what our new life, as people of God, is to be built on. Sometimes we may be labelled as being fundamentalist, if we wish to adhere closely to God's word - yet this word is the fundamental aspect on which we stand, if we are to be his church!

In fact Peter says - if we are to live our lives as people who belong to God - it is a case of having our fundamental attitude to life altered. Instead of craving for wealth, for recognition, for all the many things which we are told we can't live without, we are to crave for the Word of God, as a small baby craves for milk. We are not to be satisfied with anything less than God's Word, for it is only through this Word that we can grow as being people of God! Being grounded on Christ and His Word of love and of forgiveness, our lives become meaningful and fulfilled.

Christ is the **chosen cornerstone, and anyone who believes in him will never be disappointed.** Christ was chosen by God, was appointed by God to be the One, who returns to us what we had lost, as our result of sinning. That is why, in our turning to him, we will not be disappointed. Of course there will still be disappointments in my life - but they are usually the result of wanting something else than the life Christ gives me. These disappointments may be necessary, so that I take a fresh look at myself; so that I question what I have built my life on, and where it is that I am heading.

Christ is the stone, but he does not find universal acceptance. In fact, Peter writes that Christ as cornerstone has been rejected by many. For us it must be clear therefore, that the closer we associate ourselves with him, the more we are brought to understand what this rejection means. It seems strange that God's love, that his offer of forgiveness and life is not always accepted - that it is not understood - yet,

that is exactly what happens. So, when the church is accepted and lauded by all, it may be that it needs to look at itself and ask: Are we still where we need to be as people of Jesus Christ? Have we given in to the temptation to conform our lives to the world around us?

Yet, it is as the living cornerstone that Christ is so important for our life, as he stands fast in the changing world we live in. It is when we try to replace him with our thoughts and ideas, that cracks start appearing in our lives - in the relationships with people around us. That is why it is so important to hold on to him when the things happening in your life threaten to carry you away in the torrent of change which surrounds us. He gives your life the security which otherwise is missing. In this he will never disappoint us.

Always coming back to Christ, then we will also be like **living stones** being built into the house which his church and congregation are. There may be two aspects we need to pay attention to in this regard.

Firstly there is the aspect of being built into this **spiritual temple**: through our Baptism we have been built into this construction which is the church of our Lord. As the people of God we are not just individuals: we have been built into this spiritual temple with many other stones.

That means being 'aligned' with the other stones - it is just not on, that each individual stone can lie as it wants in the wall, or that it should branch out in the direction of its own choice. The direction we are to take in the wall is given by the Builder, by God! On fundamental issues concerning our lives, we don't get to have choices! Our position - the position we are to take also in what we do as members of the church - on matters of daily living, is given by God. Which is why, once again, it is so important to keep on returning to the cornerstone, to be in the building of which he is the cornerstone, and not to be where we choose to be, or where society is intent on leading us.

Being built into this house of the church together with other stones: We were not asked which stones we would like to associate with - with which we would like to be in close proximity. We are called on to bear this structure together with those stones with which we have been built in: whoever they are! These 'co-stones' are important, and we need to spend time with them. We are, therefore, not to keep on looking for 'greener pastures' - for a building more befitting our standing. We are

not to look for places where we will receive more recognition. We are to be *living stones* where the Builder of the church has placed us!

It is important for us to be **living** stones. There are enough dead stones - stones which just fill a space without doing anything else. As living stones we are to notice what is happening around us - in our congregation and in the area we live and work in. As living stones we are to spread light and life to the surrounding stones. Of course we can only really do that if the fundamentals are right - if God's Word is at the centre of our lives!

Being built up as God's people - that is why we meet here, why we read his Word and allow it to influence our thinking. These are times when God is at work in us - not just papering over the cracks in our lives, but making us to be quite new again. We are here to receive God's goodness, so that we will then be able to **show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light**. This *goodness* of the Lord is to light up our lives, and to shine on our world. It is not something we can or may keep to ourselves!

Our world is to see how great and wonderful God's grace is through us. We are to show that it was not how good we are that brought us into this people of God - but how good our Lord is to us, and to all who are to receive the life He gives.

Being built up as God's chosen People! As a Master Builder God has been building you up as part of his church, because God wants you and me to be where He is. As a living stone in the church we are to continue receiving his love and grace, but also in sharing what he has given us with those around us.