

“From Reject to Cornerstone”—Luke 20:17-19

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “From Reject to Cornerstone”, is Luke 20:17-19 → Jesus *looked directly at the religious leaders of the people and said, “What then is this that is written: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on Him at that very hour, for they perceived that He had told this parable against them, but they feared the people.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

How well do you deal with criticism? This is a valid question for every one of us because it is automatic for us to pass every word, every experience and everything we see through our value system, making some kind of judgment about it. When someone criticizes your behavior how do you react or respond? Many will interpret it as rejection and react with defensiveness. This sensitivity is so prevalent in us that even if someone criticizes a personal preference of some sort we can feel rejection at some level and may get defensive. “What’s wrong with broccoli? I like broccoli!” Nobody likes to feel

rejected!

So then, how do you deal with God's Law as proclaimed in the Scriptures when it condemns you for your sins? Rebelling with defensiveness in an effort to justify your sinful actions so that they appear proper and good is actually rejection of God's will for your life. Ignoring it by closing your eyes and ears to its message is also rejecting God's will for your life. So, how is God supposed to respond to our rejection of Him as He continues to give *all mankind, believer and unbelievers, life and breath and everything?* (cf. Acts 17:25) This is what Jesus was dealing with in our text. The leaders of God's people who were supposed to lead them by His written Word actually led them away from that Word by rejecting God's will for them in the Person & Work of Jesus.

Our text is Jesus' application of a parable which He spoke to *the chief priests and the scribes with the elders* (cf. Luke 20:1) of God's people. As with many of His parables He used the picture of a vineyard. It has been called the parable of the tenants. The parable is rather simple. A man planted a vineyard, entrusted it to some tenants and sent his servants three separate times in an effort to collect his share of the crop, only to have them return beaten and wounded. When he sent his son they killed him. The point of the parable is how the owner of the vineyard would destroy those tenants and give his vineyard to other tenants who would *give Him the fruits in their seasons.* (cf.

Matthew 21:24)

The parable was about those religious leaders standing before Jesus who had treated God's servants (i.e. the prophets) and now His Son with rejection. In Matthew's account Jesus stated this application to the religious leaders very clearly in Matthew 21:43 → *Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.* No wonder verse 19 of our text says *the scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on Him at that very hour!* They reacted to being criticized for how they functioned in their positions of spiritual leadership with defensiveness and rejection of God's will for their lives in Jesus.

Before we so quickly point the finger at these religious leaders with a "Tisk, tisk, tisk!" we must take notice of the three fingers pointing back at ourselves. How do we respond or react to those sent to us to proclaim God's Word in His church today? The temptation to function in God's church with a self-serving attitude is not unique to these religious leaders. It shines forth in us members of His vineyard when we reject God's will for our lives as it is proclaimed through His servants in the church. We are all bound to submit to anyone who proclaims and applies God's written Word to our lives, both the sin and righteousness in our lives! We are also bound to submit to that Word and stop our sinful actions in faithfulness to God our Father and live in obedience to

Him on the basis of His Word! Take care lest Jesus is actually rejected in the very house of those whom He has purchased with His blood!

Actually the sending of His servants to such sinful rebels displays God's patience and the sending of His Son to them displays His ultimate love for us! Since these guys with whom Jesus was conversing were experts in the Scriptures He pointed them to very Scriptures which they claimed they were following in order to convict them of their sin as they considered its meaning: *"What then is this that is written: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'?"* (cf. Verse 17 & Psalm 118:22) It compares God's Church to a building and the actions of its builders. The whole purpose of this building serves the cornerstone as it is guided by the cornerstone.

Listen to how Ephesians 2:19-22 carries on this prophetic picture in the description of Christ's Church today: *You are . . . members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in Whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Notice we are **members** of this household.* It belongs to Jesus, not to us. We do not own it. We are simply tenants and servants of Christ in it, justified and sanctified for the purpose of doing **His** will, not ours.

Christ has brought us together in this church to serve Him, not serve so that we can push our own personal agendas and desires on to the church. Christ has brought us together in this church to glorify Him, not glorify an organization like some kind of important faith-based institution in our lives. Christ has brought us together in this church to dispense the forgiveness of sins, not allow sin to breed more and more sin. Christ has brought us into this church to live as victor's in His delivering us from the power of sin, death and the devil, not live as victims of sins past, present or future. Christ is the cornerstone which guides and gives direction for the building of and functioning in the church. The church does not direct and guide Christ!

In order for us to be brought into this church Jesus humbled Himself and went from cornerstone to reject. The rejection of Jesus by people actually led to God's ultimate act of love and grace on our behalf—the salvation for all people. However, enduring the rejection of sinners was not that which brought your forgiveness. As difficult as this rejection may have been it paled in comparison with the rejection Jesus experienced when He bore all your sins on Himself on that cross. Matthew 27:46 records Jesus' expression of this rejection while on the cross: *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* It was His death and rejection **by God** which gives you salvation. Psalm 118:23 says about Jesus' rejection: *This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous*

in our eyes.

To confess that such hellish rejection of Jesus because of our sins *is marvelous in our eyes* can only happen by faith in our Cornerstone, Jesus Christ. That faith is created by the Holy Spirit as you feel this cornerstone break your self-serving, sinful spirit and, in the crushing power of God's Law, repent of your sins and allow Christ to be the cornerstone of your life. Jesus alluded to this in verse 18 of our text: *Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.* Only by experiencing this breaking and crushing can you come to confess Jesus as your cornerstone in the forgiveness of your sins once and for all!

In this new life Jesus truly moves from reject to cornerstone, both individually and as His church! He guides our thoughts, attitudes and the way our lives should be lived by the Holy Spirit's power working through the written Word! It was Jesus' endurance of the rejection on the cross that has made us "tenants" (i.e. servants) of God's "vineyard" (i.e. His Church) **want** to produce fruit **for Him** and **serve Him!** Amen.

As you come to Him, a living stone

rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,

you yourselves like living stones

are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood,

to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

(1 Peter 2:4-5)

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.