

## Easter Hope: A Rock Solid Hope ~ 1 Peter 2:4-10

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ May 18, 2014

<sup>4</sup> As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— <sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house<sup>[a]</sup> to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” <sup>7</sup> Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” <sup>8</sup> and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. <sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

One of my favorite authors is a man by the name of Clive Cussler. I enjoy the way he weaves a tale of adventure, it draws me in and keeps me entertained and guessing until the end of the book. He has written over 50 novels. One of the series of his novels that I have thoroughly enjoyed is called *The Oregon Files*. These nine books detail the adventures of a special ops mercenary team lead by a man named Juan Cabrillo. The series title gets its name from the cargo ship they occupy and which centers as a base of operations.

From the outside, the *Oregon* doesn’t look like much. It looks like a dilapidated old ship with rust stains and a mismatch of peeling paint. The deck is a collection of non-working equipment and empty oil barrels. It barely looks like it should be staying afloat, let alone hauling cargo around the world. But this rust bucket is only skin deep, it is merely a cover for what lies beneath. This cover allows them access into any port and allows them to escape notice of just about everybody. Underneath the rusting exterior is the heart of the *Oregon*. It’s a military grade war-ship, fitted with everything under the sun, including a fictitious electromagnetic engine which fuels the ship by the very water she passes through. No luxury is spared – from the crewman’s cabins to the five-star restaurant quality galley.

But it is the exterior which everyone overlooks that allows the *Oregon* and its crew to have the jump on the opponents. Things are certainly not what they seem when you look at the outside of *Oregon* freighter. And it is in a similar way which the apostle Peter pictures Jesus Christ. He was not much to look at from the outside, but he was more than anyone expected. The picture he uses to describe our Easter hope this morning is that of a living Stone. A stone that is certainly precious, but a stone that is also overlooked and as a result rejected. But it is in this living stone that our hope is found. It is in this living stone that we have ROCK SOLID EASTER HOPE. It shows us:

1. Who he is
2. Who we are

As we take a look at both who he is, and who we are with this ROCK SOLID EASTER HOPE, we see two very stark realities. These are the differences between believers and unbelievers. We see how in some ways we vary from the unbelieving world around us very little, and in other ways, we vary from the unbelieving world around us very much. And Peter starts by sharing with us who Jesus is. Peter of all people would know who Jesus was, he was with him for three years. He had made his mistakes with Jesus, he opened his mouth when he shouldn't have, and yet he learned from those mistakes, and it is here and now that Peter gives us some insight into who Jesus is.

The first thing he makes mention of right away about this living stone is that he was “**rejected by humans.**” Now at first it may seem like Peter is just talking about the unbelievers here, but I think he has more in mind than just that. This is where we were very similar to unbelievers. This is where we need to look to the Bible to see how similar we are to unbelievers. Because it wasn't just the unbelievers that crucified Jesus, it was all people. All people rejected him. He was not the Messiah that the Jewish people were looking for, he was not the messiah that we were looking for. In fact, the world today, doesn't even see the need for a messiah. A messiah, what's that? Oh he saves you, from what? What do you mean I can't live anyway I want? I don't believe that!

It could be easy for us to point the blame at other people, say it was other people who rejected Jesus, but we were just as guilty. We are just as guilty of rejecting him as those who asked for his crucifixion. God's word tells us, “**there is no one who seeks God, not even one.**” That includes us. By nature, we were “**dead in sin,**” unable to please God, nor where we looking to, even if we were, “**all of our righteous acts were filthy rags.**” It is this truth of Scripture that must be believed even though at times it cannot be felt.

It only makes sense that a fallen world that makes far from perfect judgment would reject something perfect, because it is so foreign. But mankind's rejection of God's perfect gift did not negate the gift, it did not negate God's choosing of it. Peter has already told us that before the creation of the world Christ was chosen to come to earth. Once again he says that God has chosen this living stone. This living stone is precious to him. He is precious to him because of what he accomplished. He accomplished what we could not, what we would not. That is what makes him precious.

Peter calls this gift a cornerstone, or a capstone. Both of these are key components of a building. Today, we might think of a cornerstone as that stone which has the date the building was built. But it is more than that. The cornerstone was the stone upon which everything else is measured up against. The cornerstone was perfectly square and laid in precisely the right spot. If the cornerstone were laid incorrectly, the whole house could collapse. The capstone carries with it the same idea. The capstone was the highlight of Roman architecture. The Romans needed a stone to support their arches, to keep them from falling in on one another, and so they positioned a specially shaped capstone. A well placed capstone would only get stronger with more weight placed up it. Without the capstone, the building would not survive.

Jesus, like a cornerstone, was the key component in God's plan. For “**while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**” So it wasn't that Jesus saw how good we were going to be and said we were worth dying for. No, we were never worth dying for, and yet God made us worth dying for. For it was God who made us

into a spiritual house, built upon that cornerstone, built upon that capstone. God builds us into his house. This is just one of the pictures God's Word has for his Church, believers, we are living stones that are being built into his house.

Then, to confirm that Peter is not just making something new up, he goes back to the Old Testament to make his point, the first of five times he does that in this section. Isaiah wrote, **"See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."** Not only was this cornerstone chosen by God, but he made this cornerstone nothing to be ashamed of either. Peter doesn't just say, "he will never be put to shame," but "he will NEVER be put to shame. There is no possibility of this even remotely happening.

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I can only wonder if Peter was thinking back to his time with Jesus as he was writing these words, certainly he would have been. He would have remembered the time he and the other disciples got into a small fishing boat to cross the Sea of Galilee. Jesus, tired from a day of teaching, made a bed for himself and went to sleep. A storm arose on the sea and the disciples were so afraid they were going to drown. They had forgotten entirely who was in the boat with them, the very God who created everything around them. They were never truly in any real danger. They woke Jesus up and he simply rebuked the waves and everything was still. **"Oh you of little faith, why were you afraid?"** There was never any reason for them to be scared, just like there wasn't any reason for them to be ashamed.

This is who he is, and it makes us who we are. Unafraid and unashamed. Why? Because **"to you who believe, this stone is precious."** Think of a valuable possession you own. Perhaps it's a piece of jewelry. Perhaps it's an autographed baseball or football, perhaps it's a diploma, perhaps it's your kids. These things are precious to you and you're not ashamed of them, instead, quite the opposite, you show them off, you talk about them. And so God makes our view of Jesus precious.

This is far different than the unbelieving world, this is far different than our natural state. The unbelieving world has rejected Jesus, this living stone. They consider him not worth the effort, he has become **"a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall."** These are the same words that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians, he says the message we preach is **"a stumbling block for Jews, and foolishness for Gentiles."** We can see Biblical Christianity has always been at odds with popular belief – whether it's concerning a 6-day creation, believing in supernatural miracles like resurrections, or that we are held to a higher standard than our own beliefs of what is right and wrong.

And the only thing that makes us different than unbelievers isn't some decision we made to follow Christ, but it was because we were chosen. Last weekend was the NFL draft, where college football players hoped to be picked by an NFL team. The players didn't choose where they were going, but the exact opposite, they were chosen by teams. That is what it is like when God chose us. He says who we are, **"A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession."** We have been chosen by God for a specific purpose, and that purpose is to **"offer spiritual sacrifices"** and to **"declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness and into his wonderful light."**

So a Christian life is not about us choosing God, it's not just the fact that we were just chosen by God. It is a Christian life that comes with purpose. Because being a Christian is not just a head knowledge, it is a heart knowledge. We don't just know it, we live it too. In our Sunday morning Bible Class we are talking about different ways that we can live our Christian lives. Ultimately all of these ways that we can think about living our Christian faith come down to one thing – carrying out the mission of Jesus, the mission he gave to the women at the tomb on Easter Sunday morning, the mission he gave to his disciples before he ascended – that is to tell the world what he has done. We are spiritual priests offering spiritual offerings.

As people of God we will act differently than the world around us. Because of that the world will think that we are strange, and in a way we are. The way we live is not in line with the way this sinful world operates. And yet instead of just fitting in, we can be different. Because our hope is founded in something far more sure than anything this world can offer. While this world builds its foundations on the latest craze after the latest craze, we build our foundation firmly on the Solid Rock. And those who place their trust in this Solid Rock will **NEVER** be put to shame. Amen!