

☞ Living Stones

In my sermon “Heaven’s Gate,” a couple weeks ago, Jacob used an ordinary stone to rest. It was just one of the stones there; nothing special at all. However, before the story ended, Jacob took that simple stone and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on it. God can use every day, ordinary people like you and me to do his will. **He takes us (ordinary stones), ☞ pours the Holy Spirit (the oil) on us and works in us to become pillars in his house.** If you feel like an ordinary stone, remember that God is still using you. He is building his house, and you are part of it!

☞ 1 Peter 2:4-12

☞ v. 4 **As you come to him... keep coming to Jesus**

Jesus is the Living Stone... Rejected by men; Chosen by God; Precious to God

☞ Cf. v. 6 **cornerstone** – the church is built on **the foundation** of Jesus himself...

Matthew 16:18

I tell you that you are Peter, (*piece of a larger rock*) and on this rock (*mass of rock*) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Matthew 7:24-25

everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25** The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

☞ v. 5 **We are like Living Stones...** Rejected by men; Chosen by God; Precious to God

Contrast 1:24... all men are like grass...

Living = not lifeless; not dead, but alive... also, to enjoy real life; having vitality
Not the “frozen chosen”

☞ **He wants us to have a fulfilling life.**

John 10:10

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. NIV

KJV ...have it more abundantly.

NLT ...to give them a rich and satisfying life.

AMP ...have *and* enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows).

Stones, being built into a spiritual house – he’s not building a grass hut that will wash ☞ away in heavy rains or dry up and crumble under intense heat. **He wants us to be firm in our faith**, like stones for building a stable, enduring home.

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

God isn’t building just any house, but he’s building house for himself to live in... **He ☞ wants to reside in us.**

Ephesians 2:22

in him you are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

About building with stones... Sometimes stones may be gathered from fields and mortared together. But more often stones are cut and hewn from quarries and then used for building...

The surface of natural rock beds are invariably covered by some thickness of soil or loose material. Irrespective of the methods of quarrying of stones, this over-burden has to be cleared first before the actual quarrying operation could be started.

☞ **God will remove junk from our lives.** This can feel like we are being exposed. He uncovers junk in our hearts and mind. He works to remove those things that have held us down and kept us from being useful to him. Many times this happens at salvation when a person feels a great weight lifted and they are set free in Christ. But God wants to go further than that.

Once the loose cover of soil over the rock is removed and the surface is cleared, it is then systematically broken into blocks of desired sizes either by driving wedges or by cutting channels. --With the wedge method holes are drilled and wedges inserted, then pounded to develop cracks. Then bars are inserted into the holes and cracks to dislodge the rock. --With the cutting method deep cuts are made around the desired rock, then the wedge method is followed.

The bottom line is that to become a stone in God’s house we have to **separate from ☞ anything that keeps us from being useful to God.** Sometimes we don’t want to let go of

things in our past or things that are keeping us from seriously getting close to God. God will keep hammering away at those things in order to draw us closer to himself.

Other methods of quarrying are heat and blasting. --In the heating method a contained fire is placed on the desired rock causing expansion and cracking. --In the blasting method holes are drilled and explosives are placed and detonated.

God is determined for his people to be useful stones in his house. Let's not resist his efforts, forcing him to turn up the heat or blow up parts of our lives. All our lives God works on us, chiseling away those parts of our life that hinder us from fitting into His eternal temple. Our Christian life is a work in progress. Jesus Christ is changing us from a ☞useless stone to a useful one. **Let's surrender to his quarrying efforts.**

Before Michelangelo created the masterpiece we know simply as "David," Agostino di Duccio had worked diligently but unsuccessfully on a large piece of marble. He gave up his effort for unknown reasons. Some others tried after him but failed. This piece of marble was laid in a rubbish heap for nearly 40 years. But Michelangelo saw the stone and believed that it had great possibilities. From that seemingly worthless stone was carved one of the world's masterpieces of sculpture - David. Michelangelo believed every stone had a sculpture within it, and the work of sculpting was simply a matter of chipping away all that was not a part of the statue.

☞**When Jesus looks at us,** He doesn't see a rough piece of rock but **He sees our potential to be a beautiful stone useful in his temple.** As the Master Sculptor He is able to chip away all that is not a part of what He wants us to be.

☞**Revelation 3:12**

Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God.

This is God's goal for you. He wants more than a collection of ordinary stones. He wants pillars in his temple. He wants people who will surrender to his shaping methods. People who will become solid and secure; strong and stable; immovable and unshakeable in their faith. People who will really live their faith to the fullest.

☞v. 5 **to be (We are becoming) a holy priesthood**

☞**We have access to God.**

Hebrews 4:16

Let us then fearlessly *and* confidently *and* boldly draw near to the throne of grace AMP

Offering spiritual sacrifices... As a part of this "holy priesthood" we are to "offer up spiritual sacrifices." How do we do this? We offer ourselves... by serving, by praying, by worshiping, by thanking God.

Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

Now we're getting to the heart of the matter... offering our very selves to God. He has a plan and a purpose for each of us to become pillars in his house. But he wants us to willingly offer ourselves to him. Peter tells us that these "spiritual sacrifices" are acceptable to God! This is only possible through Christ. We offer ourselves as living, spiritual ☞ sacrifices and **we are acceptable to God.**

If you're a believer, you have already been accepted by God and you have access to God.

v. 9-12 ☞ Chosen by God	(chosen; royal; holy; belonging to God)
☞ Called out of darkness	(into wonderful light; received mercy)
☞ Commissioned to declare praises	(lit., announce God's excellence)
☞ Consecrated to live good lives	(abstain from sinful desires)

You, like everyone else are simply an ordinary stone, but God has chosen you to be a part of his holy temple. God has so much more in mind for us than we often imagine. Too many think, "God can't do much with someone like me." We see people that we think are pillars in the church and we don't think we can be like that. But, those people weren't always pillars! They started out just like you and as they surrendered, God worked in them to become what they are today. (*My cousins*). We are all like living stones. God wants to build us into a dwelling for his spirit. He ultimately wants us to be pillars in his temple. Do you want to be a pillar? Don't be satisfied with just being a stone!

God wants to take up residence in us and remove the junk from our lives. We are called to separate from anything that hinders his work in us and surrender ourselves fully to him. He wants us to have a fulfilling life and he wants us to be firm in our faith; to be pillars in his temple.

☞ So the question today is, **"Will you allow God to make you into a useful stone in his house?" "Will you surrender yourself, allowing him to remove the junk and anything that hinders?" "Will you allow God to shape you into a pillar in his temple?"**

☞ **Video – I Surrender All**