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Rejected but Precious by Ben S.

1Peter 2:4-9

Do you ever feel peculiar because you are a Christian? Do you fear rejection when you share your faith in Jesus Christ? Do you feel the church is marginalised? Or do you look at the church and think 'what a mess!; is the church making any difference?' Do you ever feel sad at the world's attitude to Jesus Christ? Do you ever think 'what is God up to? His plan doesn't seem to be working very well.' Peter tells the Christians in Turkey not to be surprised when they are rejected and marginalised. They may be exiles but they are chosen and loved by God. So often the things that God loves and honours are rejected and dishonoured. In this chapter (1Peter 2:4-5a) Peter summarised God's great master plan for the whole of human history. "As you come to him, [Jesus] the living Stone, rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house..." God, the divine architect, is engaged in this huge building project. He's building a spiritual house or temple for himself made up of living stones where he will live forever. He will be worshiped in that temple by his priestly people.

You are living stones: We are God's spiritual temple. God's master plan is called The Church. Really? It's so weak, so messy, so full of sin and corruption! Sit and watch what God is going to do, not with the institutional church but with all people who come to his son and trust in Jesus for their salvation and receive God's Holy Spirit. Sometimes when I walk into my children's bedroom I say it's like a building site in here. It's a mess like the field at Glanrafon School. There are piles of mud and equipment. It doesn't look like it will when it's finished. The church in this life is a bit like a building site. Much work needs to be done. Peter says just wait and see what God is going to do with these rejected oddly-shaped stones. He's going to take these diverse people who were in desperate need of mercy and build them together into this amazing huge glorious temple, where he will dwell and be worshiped. How is it possible? Peter says in verse 6-8 that God will do it on the Lord Jesus Christ his precious foundational cornerstone. A cornerstone had to be made from the strongest, flawless rock, perfectly cut because all the lines of the building would flow from it. If the cornerstone were not square the whole building would be wonky. It was the most precious stone carefully set into place. Jesus is the cornerstone of God's eternal temple made up of living stones like you and me. Christ is the one who holds the whole plan together. So often this stone that is so precious to God is rejected by this world. We inspected him and cast him aside outside the city gates where he was crucified. But those who do build their life on Jesus are joined to one another in this amazing community. When they are packed in close to Jesus Christ they are chosen and precious. You are precious to God because the preciousness of Jesus Christ is passed on you. As Jesus is honoured for all he is we too will, in him, receive that same honour on that final day. Don't be discouraged when you are made to feel ashamed for your beliefs. Don't be surprised if you are rejected by this world. Jesus knows what it feels like to be rejected by the world. But he and we are chosen and precious to God. When the church (and your own life) looks weak and messy remember God's master plan. He has begun a good work in you and he will complete it in you and in the church. Keep trusting in Jesus as God's precious corner stone. Make him the foundation of your life. Aline your life with his ways and one day God will pull down the scaffolding to reveal his final completed building project.

Come to him. Trust in him. Be part of that structure. Be a living stone connected to Jesus and one another.

You are a kingdom of priests called to serve and worship God. (1Peter2:9) "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." This is a good verse to memorise. This is who you are. "We are a royal priesthood." This is the priesthood of all believers. Primarily we all have access to God through Jesus Christ. Priests are invited to draw near to the Lord and to enjoy God's hospitality. Could there be anything better? In the Old Testament the priests could not come to the temple casually. They had to be cleansed and robed first. We are invited to do exactly the same thing. We were made to walk with the Lord like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. But when they rejected the Lord they had to leave their tabernacle. Sin barred them from God's presence. The story of salvation is about how God opened up a way for us to come back to God. When God saved his people from slavery in Egypt he says, "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:4-6) They were a nation of priests: men and women, young and old. God dwelled among all of them. They were all invited to come and have communion with the Lord. As Peter writes to the little, exiled churches scattered, over Northern Turkey he says that this is true of you, both Jew and Gentile, everyone who is trusting in Jesus. Our great high priest made the ultimate sacrifice so we could all have equal access to the presence of the King of Kings. So we are cleansed and clothed in the righteousness of Christ. So will you draw near to him through the Lord Jesus Christ? He will draw near to you.

The role of the priest: Verse 5 tells us we are a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And verse 9 says "We are to declare the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." What does it mean to offer God spiritual sacrifice? Paul says in Romans 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This is your true and proper worship." Worship is drawing near to God and surrendering every area (work, money, reputation, sex-life, time, house, mouth, my proud unforgiving spirit) of your life to him in response to his mercy, grace and love. It flows from a response to his mercy not from a resentful sense of duty. We do it because once we were in darkness with a desperate need of mercy but now we are in the light. We confess with our lips the goodness of God and declare his praises. "Our hallelujahs join the anthem of the heavenly host but they are overheard by our neighbours." We are called to be a light to the nations, a city set on a hill. God's great strategy works and you are the evidence of that this morning. Serve and worship God in word and deed. Shine for him.