

# The Foundation & Cornerstone

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## Introduction

This past week, I had the privilege to observe how a foundation was prepared for a summer cottage which my in-laws are building near Kajaani. As you all know, building in Finland requires a bit more care as you need to take the long, freezing weather conditions into consideration during the winter as well. The foundation provides a good supporting structure for the rest of the building to last for over hundred years. I have found the process informative and fascinating, while providing needed assistance to my ageing in-laws.



Without being too long, I want to share a little bit of what I have observed. Hopefully this experience will serve as a springboard for what I want to share with you today in our devotion.

### 1. Selection of a suitable place (earlier work).

- Some months before this week's work, my father-in-law chose a suitable site where the future building was going to be constructed (flat area, on stable ground and minimum natural risk). A plan was drafted and approved by the City of Kajaani after inspection.
- Surveyors came to see the place the previous week before the foundation was laid. Sophisticated theodolites with built-in GPS's and linked to computers were used to make sure that the land was leveled and corners of the future walls measured precisely for the future structure.
- After all that was approved, a company came to build the foundation.

### 2. Laying the foundation

- This was the exciting phase when all the action started. A crane dug up trenches where the electricity cables, heating and wastewater pipes were to be laid which would connect at the right slope angle to the drainage and grey water system. The heating pipe system was then insulated with Finnfoam, for protection against freezing. When the constructor was pleased with everything that needed to be in place, everything was covered with earth, leveled and then compacted. The rest of building surface was "sealed" with Finnfoam.

### 3. Preparing pillars for the structure

- Cubic concrete and stone blocks weighing over 100 kg each were systematically placed on top of the foam. They were constructed in such a way that it will host the heavy concrete-stone pillars. Each block received a pillar. Once that was completed, the concrete base was covered with fresh gravel and leveled, just leaving the pillars exposed on which the summer house would come to rest in the next two weeks.

#### 4. Significance of the foundation:

- This strong foundation with all the other necessary features, provides support on which this heavy structure will rest soon on. The main structure consisting of wooden walls, windows and doors, capped with a roof would soon come to rest on it. The new summer place will be filled with the necessities in the kitchen, sauna, bedroom and living room.
- This place will provide a place to stay. Over time the family will decorate it to their hearts desire. Hopefully over time they can create some good memories and others will visit and enjoy this cottage for the next 100 years.

#### Main message

Today's devotion is from 1 Peter 2:1-12. My experience this week has motivated me to continue looking into the letter of 1 Peter. Some of you may have been around when I shared two devotions based on the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of 1 Peter in the last several months.

Follow with me on the projector screen or if you have a Bible in any format, you may follow in it if you wish. As I read, may the Lord speak to you through His Word for what He would like you to take away today (inspire, encourage, teach, direct or rebuke us where necessary).

#### [1 Peter 2:1-12 NIV](#)

2 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house[a] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 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.”[b]

7 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,”[c]

8 and,

“A stone that causes people to stumble  
and a rock that makes them fall.”[d]

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

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. 10 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.

11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

## Sermon

Before I go into the main message, here is a recap about the background of the audience Peter is writing to:

- He was writing to Jewish Christians in Asia Minor which is modern day Turkey.
- These Christians were saved through Paul's ministry (as recorded in the book of Acts as well as in Ephesians)
- They have been growing through incredible persecution at the time because of their faith in Jesus Christ.
- They were persecuted from the Greek culture and referred to as cannibals.
- They were forced out of Jerusalem (their place of worship), and now lived as foreigners in a strange land.
- So, Peter writes to them under these circumstances to encourage them to keep their focus on the **Living Hope** in chapter one and build their faith on the **Living Stone** and "capstone" who is the best foundation to build their lives on.

Looking at this passage from a discipleship perspective, has helped me to put together a few key points which Peter is making to this group of Christians in Asia Minor:

### 1. The first one is the responsibility they had to grow spiritually towards maturity:

- i. How do you grow? V1. – get rid of distractive practices.
  - *Malice* (desire to harm someone),
  - *Deceit* (practice of deceiving someone – cheating someone intentionally),
  - *Hypocrisy* (saying something but not doing or living accordingly)
  - *Envy* (opposite – lack of contentment – resentful – desire what others have),
  - *Slander* (making false or damaging statements about someone)
- ii. *Get rid of sin* – V11 (abstain from sinful desires) – it brings war against the soul. God hates sin, we are to deal with it (1 John 1:9).
- iii. *Crave to grow in the Jesus (like babies crave for milk)* – prayer, reading and studying His Word

### 2. God wants to build his church through Jesus the foundation and capstone and us His chosen people.

- Peter uses the metaphor of a spiritual house to illustrate what he means. This house would have a solid foundation (Isiah 28:16) and cornerstone in Jesus (whom he also describes as the living stone in V4).

*Revisit Isaiah's prophecy in Ch 28:16*

- Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says:  
"Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem,<sup>[a]</sup>  
a firm and tested stone.  
It is a precious cornerstone that is safe to build on.  
Whoever believes need never be shaken.<sup>[a]</sup>
- He is alive – not a historical figure or a prophet who lived and died. He is living in our hearts – still busy changing hearts and bringing together those who would put their faith in Him.

- We have been made alive in Christ (Paul's reference in Ephesians) – so we are also living stones called for a purpose to be part of God's church (spiritual house) which he is building. He is building His church to do the work of priest and serving the body of Christ. It involves laying aside our own desires daily to serve him and others. Priest are to continue to do the work of the Great Commission (Mat 28:18-20 – evangelism and discipleship).

### 3. Word of encouragement to the Christians

- Peter uses the word *precious* on more than one occasion. I don't know if the reference is perhaps from the precious blood of Jesus that was shed for us? V7. As believers in Jesus, they are precious in His sight. They were precious in the eyes of Jesus. They were a special people even if they were seen as nothing by those who oppressed and persecuted them.
- He also reminds them that they were a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God (identity – purpose, special).

4. **Finally, he encourages them to keep doing the good things and live as aliens and foreigners** even in the midst of suffering – people can very easily go into resentment and hate and have nothing to do with those who causes us distress and discrimination. But Peter says they should continue do the good things they were doing for Jesus amongst the same people who persecute them and make false accusations. It is the best witness someone can give to their faith. Maybe one day, their example would cause others to help discover their faith in Jesus.

### What about us?

- We live in difficult times too (Weih's recent example of Christian persecution in China - 200 Christians were arrested for fellowshiping in their own homes)
- Christians face global persecution because of the Christian message which can be perceived as discrimination. The corona virus has brought many challenges including restrictions to normal living, death, economic losses, global recession, loss of jobs and lay-offs etc. Terminal illnesses of all sorts including cancer brings difficulties. Divisions in the church and many other personal difficulties are other challenging things.
- Another example of persecution is the Nigerian Christians who are separated because of religious believes.

### How are we to respond?

1. Peter reminds us that those who put their faith/trust in Jesus, will not be shamed or will stumble. We have the best foundation and capstone to build our lives on.
2. Get rid of sin and any other distractive aspects around us.
3. Keep doing the good things personally and corporately – tell others about Jesus, build your faith in Him craving for spiritual food. Hang onto the Hope that we have – we have and inheritance waiting for us...
4. We are precious people because of what Jesus has done on the cross for us if you have put your trust in Him. We have an identity in Jesus - a chosen people, royal priesthood, living stones who are called to worship and live a life of sacrifice in Jesus.