

Fifth Sunday of Easter – Epistle

“Jesus Rocks”

1 Peter 2:2-10

**Fifth Sunday of Easter
Analysis by Marcus Felde**

2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation – 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. 4 Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and 5 like living stones, let yourselves be built* into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

6 For it stands in scripture:

*“See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious;*

and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”*

7 To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,

*“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the very head of the corner,”*

8 and

*“A stone that makes them stumble,
and a rock that makes them fall.”*

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim

the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

*10 Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.*

DIAGNOSIS: Who Do Not Believe the Word Perish

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – Stumbling Around

1 Peter suggests there are many ways to stumble. The futile ways of ancestors (1:18), serving the ways of the flesh (2:11), using freedom as a pretext for evil (2:16), too much makeup (3:3), dissing the wife (3:7), excesses of dissipation (4:4), complaining about your company (4:9b), making mischief (4:15), etc. Ad nauseam.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – Missing the Step

What makes the stumblebum stumble? Not seeing the stone, because it is dark in our hearts, and because the stone is invisible to those who do not believe. Tasting the Lord (2:3) and not liking it. Chewing but not swallowing. "Obedience to the truth" (1:22) is the key to the work of the Holy Spirit (footnote, 1:22) which alone is able to keep us from falling.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – Falling Down

Shame (2:6) and withering (1:24) are the fate of those who stumble, and finally fall. We finally realize that our opponent is God (5:5). This is not a level playing field.

PROGNOSIS: Who Believe the Word Perdure

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – Chosen By the

Rejected One

But we are chosen (2:9) by the rejected (2:7). That stone in our path? If we see him for what he is, if we see “that the Lord is good,” and realize the stone is just the right one to serve as cornerstone, then we are safe. We assimilate to the rock, and we ourselves get picked. And picked up. God no longer opposes us, but proposes to use us for his ends.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *Believing He Is Precious*

Faith in the Word, “the good news that was announced to you” (1:25), is the differentiator. The ice the unbeliever slips on, the believer skates on. The water the unbeliever drowns in, the believer drinks. It’s a binary system, and the single statement on the true/false quiz is “Jesus is precious.” God grades; we are coal or we are diamond.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *Built into a Spiritual House*

“Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house” (2:5); that is true spirituality. Active voice (“build yourselves”) would be false. We long (2:2), God nurses us, we “grow into salvation” (a delicious phrase). When Christians long to be nourished at the deepest level (represented in exegetical “crossings” by the Final Diagnosis and Initial Prognosis), and stay attuned to what is going on in our hearts (the middle level of the crossings), we may expect to grow, thrive, last through everything—until the very Last Day. And our shininess will proclaim not our goodness but “the mighty acts of him who . . .” (2:9).

I include a rough little hymn I once wrote to accompany a sermon on 1 Peter 2:9-10. (Its tune is unfamiliar, being from Papua New Guinea.) The words that are in Pidgin I have translated in brackets.

Once We Were No Nation

By Marcus Felde, for Martin Luther Seminary, Lae, Papua New Guinea, 1996

1. Once we were no nation,
We survived in darkness,
Always on the outside,
Never knowing mercy,
God said "You be mine!"
Now we are a People:
Kingdom bilong God. [Kingdom of God]
Ever, evermore.
2. Once we were in prison
Guarded by the spirits,
Bowing down to Satan,
Following his wishes.
God said "You be free!"
Now we run with Jesus,
Yumi sanap strong. [We stand up strong.]
Ever, evermore.
3. Once we were divided,
Wantok serving wantok, ["Wantok"=one, from the same
language group, of 800]
Guarding every boundary,
Fearing, hating strangers.
God said, "You be one!"
Now we are united,
Yumi poroman, ["We associate"—in a strong sense, from
"fellow man"]
Ever, evermore.
4. Once we were afraid of
Death and its dominion.
Arrows flew around us,
Sickness broke our bodies.

God said, "You will live!"

Now we have a future:

Laip I stap oltaim, [Life forever]

Ever, evermore.

5. Praise to God our Father,

Praise for all his goodness.

Praise to Jesus Christ, his

Only Son, our Savior,

Evermore the same.

Praise the Holy Spirit,

Litimapim nem. [Praise the name]

Ever, evermore.