

Stephen was stoned for remaining true to his belief ~ for being a living stone waiting to be built into the spiritual house. God gave him the grace and protection promised in faith ~ the promise that he would never be abandoned and would be welcomed into eternal life. Welcomed into the spiritual house which is the Kingdom of Heaven ~ the place where the banquet is set and we are all invited to in God's time.

That house John tells us has many rooms ~ and within those rooms there is a place prepared for you and for me. It is a place of welcome, of rest, of praise and rejoicing; a place where all present rub along together serving one purpose, all fitting together. They don't know where they will fit until they move in but they know that they will make that move because they have accepted Jesus invitation ~ the invitation that He offers for God ~ that we should know Him and call Him Father. But remember Jesus is the only way that we can accept the invitation ~ we have to journey with Him ~ to be a living stone to His corner stone.

As we are shaped and prepared ~ chipped from the block of our material existence ~ we may not be able to see how we will ever fit in the wall ~ but God knows each one of us and knows exactly where He has prepared a place for us. We have to trust, to be reassured by other chips around us and to follow the makers instructions.

If you watch a dry stone waller ~ you will see them place and sometimes replace a stone until they find exactly the right position for it ~ you and I often take time to discern correctly what God desires of us ~ it can have uncomfortable and challenging moments in which we feel insecure but when we know our place there is a peace that cannot be disturbed and it comes with

Knowing Jesus and making Him known.

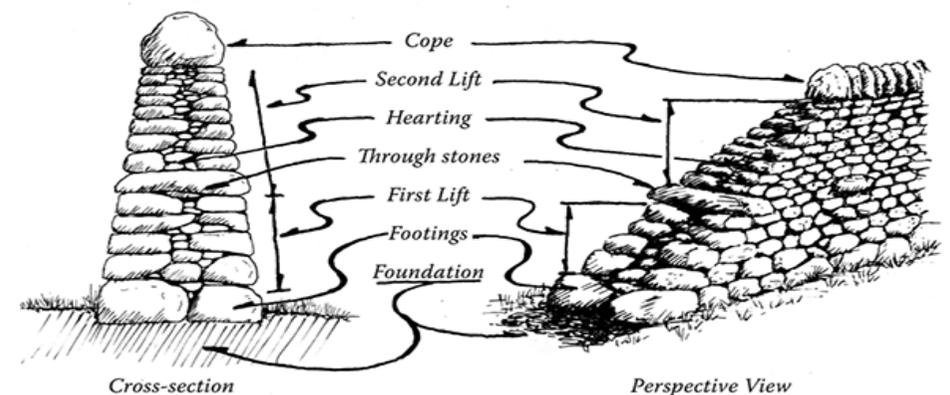
Ministry Musings (14th May 2017)

Alleluia He is Risen

There is a reason and a purpose for being Living Stones forming a Royal priesthood ~ Peter tells us:

"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."
1 Peter 2: 9

So reflect this week ~ YOU are a living stone ~ a different shape and size from every other living stone ~ but that is the way God has created you. Each stone is important and has its valued and special place. Look at a dry stone wall ~ it relies on all the stones together for its strength ~ some form the foundation, others the footings, still more the hearting (filling) stones, then there are through stones and coping stones. If one is missing or out of place then the wall is weakened. They are chosen and precious to the creator and each has a special function. What type of living stone are you and have you let the creator guide you to your place in the wall?



Knowing Jesus ~ making Him known

Readings: Acts 7: 55 - 60, NT page 122
1 Peter 2: 2 - 10 NT page 230
John 14: 1 -14 NT page 105

If you put "*brick in the wall*" into a search engine it comes up with Pink Floyd's "Another brick in the Wall" which according to the band members that wrote it is about a "wall" being the self-isolating barrier we build over the course of our lives, and the "bricks in the wall" are the people and events that turn us inward and away from others."

If you put "*chip off the old block*" into the search engine it comes up with "someone who is very similar in character to their father or mother."

Neither of these definitions fit what Peter is talking about when he calls Jesus the corner stone and those who are faithful living stones. Yet both have elements of our human nature that Christ is well aware of that are used in us being the living stones and finding our place in God's building. The self isolating barrier that Pink Floyd bass player Roger Water's speaks of is a form of protection and structure of strength but his wall is full of bricks that represent people he wants to be protected from, not people working together to provide or share something really positive.

But wait a minute ~ perhaps people outside of the church see you and I as people they think they want to be protected from ~ people that need containing because of what we have to say and the example that we give which is a challenge to their comfortable existences! Perhaps it depends which side of the wall you stand on as to how you perceive it?

What about being a "*chip off the old block*" ? Well the saying is attributed in both negative and positive ways. Often applied when someone has repeated an act that

has been done by either parents or grandparents before them ~ that might be something bad or something good ~ but it is distinctively characteristic to the family: it does not surprise the onlooker that the person has behaved in the way that they have!

The thing about chips off a block, whether wooden or stone is that each is a slightly different shape and no chip can be returned to the block it becomes an independent item! ~ now there is a similarity to the living stones that build the spiritual house! Each of us as a chip is an independent spirit, we each make a choice as to whether we will allow the Lord to use us in His building whether we will find the discipline and grace to sit alongside or "*rub along*" with our neighbouring chip! There is another saying for the search engine ~ to "*rub along*" is to cope or manage without undue difficulty!

Look at the diagram of the dry stone wall on this week's musings ~ every stone or chip is different ~ each has raw or rough edges as well as smooth ~ but when skilfully placed by the builder ~ each rubs along with its neighbour and each has an invaluable place that no other stone can fill ~ a unique role in the strength and stability of the wall. When you and I let the Spirit place us around the corner stone which is Jesus then we are recognised by God as indispensable ~ unique, cherished and loved.

What if we do not allow the Spirit to work in our lives? Then we are no more than stumbling blocks ~ just as Jesus is a stumbling block to those who do not believe s we can be a trip hazard to our friends and ourselves who are faithful ~ that is sin ~ being a hindrance to God's love by denying His presence.

Stones can be destructive and used as weapons ~ we have a graphic account of this in our Acts reading today.