

Sermons in Stone

W.W. Prescott

Some poet has spoken of seeing sermons in stones, and this will be our study this morning—to see "sermons in stones."

"**Joseph** is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (from thence is the shepherd, *the stone of Israel*)." "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" Gen. 49:22-24; 1Peter 2:4, 5. We shall see different cases, where, under one experience and another, one record and another, this thought of the "living stone" is brought out.

"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a *stone*, and put it under him, and He sat thereon." Ex. 17:8-12 The fact that Moses sat upon a stone means something more than simply that he had something to sit upon. It indicates that it was the God of Israel, "the stone of Israel," who gave him the victory.

The Stone in the Hand of Israel's Shepherd Boy.



We have, too, the case of David and Goliath. We need not take time to read how the Philistines had defeated the army of Israel, and how Goliath came out morning after morning to defy them. David, who was but a shepherd boy at this time, came down to visit his brethren. They rather despised him. "And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why

camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" I Sam. 17:28. David came from keeping the sheep. A shepherd is one who keeps his sheep, not loses them. Christ is the Good Shepherd.

David, after talking with Saul, obtained his consent to go out and fight Goliath, and "Saul armed David with his armour, and he put a helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail." He thought that if David was going to fight against Goliath, he would need armour. "And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine. And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him. And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he

disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field. Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.... And it came to pass when the Philistine arose, and came, and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone." 1 Sam. 17:38-50.

David went out in the name of the Lord, and Jesus went with him to give him the victory simply by a stone. It was not simply David's power and accuracy that caused that stone to sink into the forehead of the Philistine. It was the power of the Lord, who was fighting the battle for him. That record is for us. We have battles to fight against the enemy of the Lord of hosts, and we prevail over him with a stone. David without armour, without implements of warfare, David going forth in the faith of the Lord of hosts, is the example for us. He prevailed with a stone. Jesus Christ, the living stone, is our strength and power for our battles with the enemy.

A Building of Prepared Stones.

In 1 Kings 6, we have a record of the building of Solomon's temple. In the 7th verse is a description of the house: "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready

before it was brought thither; so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." The stones of this temple were quarried out and hewn, and each stone fitted for its particular place in the temple, before they were brought together; and then when they were brought from the quarry, each stone fitted into its place. The building was put together, stone upon stone, and there was heard no sound of ax or hammer. "They prepared timbers and stones to build the house." But all the preparing was done before they were fitted together.

"Ye also as lively stones, are built up— A Spiritual House, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Christ Jesus. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient." 1 Pet. 2:4-8. Christ is the living stone; and as soon as we come in contact with Him, we become living stones. Apart from Him, we are dead; but coming in contact with Him, we are built up a spiritual house for Him, "whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6); "Jesus Christ Himself, being the chief cornerstone." Eph. 2:20. "For ye are the temple of the living God." 2 Cor. 6:16. And the whole house, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. We are built together for an habitation of God. Each believer is a temple of God, and then the believers are built together, and that makes the church, which is the temple of the

living God, He, by His Holy Spirit, taking up His dwelling place there.

We become living stones because He is a living stone, and we are built upon Him. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid. "I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up." He will gather again a people with which to build His church. He is at work now, preparing the stones for His temple. They are being quarried and hewn, each one to fill his place in the temple of God. When that temple is complete, the work will be done.

Personal Introspection Questions

On Being a "Living Stone"

1. Am I actively "coming in contact with" Christ, the living Stone — or am I relying on my own effort to feel spiritually alive?
2. In what ways do I sense God "quarrying and hewing" me right now — shaping a rough edge, preparing me for a particular place in His temple?
3. Do I resist the hammer-and-chisel work of correction and trial, or do I trust that the shaping is preparation, not punishment?

On Facing "Giants" with Little in Hand

4. What "armor" of Saul — other people's methods, credentials, or approaches that aren't really mine — am I tempted to wear instead of trusting what God has actually equipped me with?
5. Where in my life am I facing a "Goliath" and relying on visible strength rather than the name of the Lord of hosts?

6. Like David's five smooth stones, what simple, tested resources (not impressive by the world's standards) has God already placed in my hand?

On Steadfastness Under Strain

7. When my hands grow "heavy" like Moses' in the battle against Amalek, do I let others help hold them up, or do I try to carry the weight alone?
8. Who in my life serves as "Aaron and Hur" — supporting me when I'm weary — and for whom might I need to serve in that role?

On Being Built Together

9. Do I see myself only as an individual stone, or do I recognize how I'm meant to be "fitly framed together" with other believers?
10. Is there anyone I've regarded the way Eliab regarded David — dismissing them as too young, too small, or too insignificant to be used by God?
11. Am I willing to be "disallowed" by others, as Christ the cornerstone was, if it means being faithful to what God has called me to?

On the Ongoing Work

12. What evidence do I see that God is "at work now" preparing His church, and am I cooperating with or resisting that work in my own life?

A Brief Appeal

Every stone in Solomon's temple was prepared before it ever touched the building — hewn, fitted, and made ready in secret, so that when the moment came, it simply took its place. That's the invitation of this message: don't wait for the "building" to begin

before you let the Master Builder shape you. Whatever cutting or shaping you feel right now — through trial, correction, or waiting — is not wasted time. It is preparation for a place only you can fill. Will you yield to the hand doing that work today, and let Christ, the living Stone, become the ground you stand on rather than something you merely admire from a distance?