

### **1 Peter 2:5-6**

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." This precious value, then, is for you who believe.

I would like to continue from where we left off last week; however, before we pick up with the detail around our spiritual priesthood and the spiritual sacrifices, I would like to pick up with the last part **2:6**. "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." This is a quote from **Isaiah 28:16**.

As far as the translation, I do have a couple of important issues to address. First, in the Greek, the word translated "disappointed" literally means to shame down. That is why the ESV and Young's literal translation say "will not be put to shame" and the NLT says, "will not be disgraced." Shame and disgrace carry a completely different connotation than does disappointed; and that is important for our study. Second, "believes" is in the *present active participle*, so it should read "He who is now believing on Him will not be put to shame." The *participle* makes it clear that this is an ongoing present activity ("believing") and not a onetime event that takes place when you believed. You see many people claim to believe, but are not now believing; they are not living in their now as ones who truly believe these precious truths. The NLT tries to get this point across by saying,

“those who *trust* in Him will not be disgraced.” The use of the word “trust” drives home the point that you can have an intellectual ascension to the truth but still not live as if the truth is your truth. The Spirit is clear, this precious value or truth about the choice cornerstone is for those who are now actively believing or trusting in Jesus. If practically you trust in yourself, then the value of this precious truth will probably slide right by you.

Now, I want to zero in on this idea that those who are now believing in Him will *not be put to shame*. But to understand this truth, let’s back up to what the Spirit says about Jesus being the cornerstone. The Father has placed in Zion a choice stone, a precious cornerstone. Biblically, Zion is often used as a synonym for the mountain upon which Jerusalem lies. The word is first used in **2 Samuel 5:7** referencing a mountain which stood a Jebusite fortress which David conquered and renamed the city of David. Throughout scripture, Zion became a euphemism not just for Jerusalem but also for Solomon’s Temple and in the New Testament, the New Jerusalem where Jesus talks of His gathering in fellowship with His true children—those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes having His name and the name of His father written on their foreheads (**Revelation 14:1-5**). Zion is a picture of that place where God communes and fellowships with His people in the true Temple of God; the gathering of His true believers.

As such, the Father has placed in our midst a choice stone, a precious cornerstone. As we studied last week, Jesus was the perfect stone upon which the entire spiritual kingdom of heaven could be built. Jesus had the right lines, the right angles, the right integrity, and He was found to be strong enough to bear the entire load. The master-builder inspected the stone and declared in **Luke 9:35-36**,

“This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!” The Father was clear; there is no other to whom we are to run; the Son is it. In fact, there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. Therefore, He is the one to whom we must listen and choose to build upon. And this stone is precious, honored above all others, for it is the cornerstone. We also learned that as a stone, a perfect stone, Jesus is obviously very hard, which is why **Matthew 21:44** says, “And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but upon whom it falls, it will scatter him like dust.” When it comes to man versus the stone, the stone always wins; but it is far better to fall on the stone than it is to have this stone fall on you.

So let’s tie together these concepts. Jesus is the only rock upon which we can build our lives. But if we come to Him, if we fall on Him, we will be broken to pieces. This is presented as an absolute certainty—“will be broken” is in the *indicative*. However, “fall” is in the *aorist active participle*. In other words, those who will be broken are those who as a matter of lifestyle choose to fall and fall and fall on the rock. Like “believing,” the *participle* makes it clear that this should be translated, as he who is always falling on the rock, will be broken to pieces. I think this is really fascinating. Once again the Spirit draws a hard line between those who say they believe and those who are believing. True Christianity is living in the truth not just saying you believe the truth.

So then you might ask, how will we not be disgraced or put to shame? After all, if we are broken to pieces, everyone will see our stuff: our weakness, our inability, our failure, and our sin. For the most part we keep all of that pretty locked up, but if we fall on the rock, all of it will be exposed. The irony however is that the reality of our humanity has put us to shame; in fact, we spend our whole lives trying to

cover it up. Jesus wants to free us from this shame. To explain this, I will be talking about my personal experience with shame and what I have experienced in each of you in connection with shame; and I will tie it all off with why falling on Jesus over and over and over again believing He is the choice and precious cornerstone is our only option for truly living.

When God first spoke to us about the wall that was limiting His provision for my life, it was revealed that in this wall I had a brick of shame. I had no idea what that meant or how deep it went; which is why He only asked me to pray about it. This was something that was so deep in my soul, and I was so unaware of it, that He was going to have to be the one to dig in deep, expose this area of my life to the light, and then break it away from my life. My shame was going to have to fall upon the rock and be broken to pieces. My experience with shame is important because I believe that as your shepherd, God shows me things and walks me down paths that He wants you to follow. My job is to clear the way, show you that it is safe, and encourage you to walk down this same path. Ultimately, what I learn tends to apply to this body and to each of you who is now believing. Accordingly, shame is not just my brick, but is at the root of what keeps you in bondage and prevents you from truly living as an alien in this world, as a true son of God separate from the values and ethics of this world. Thus, like me, in your life this is a brick that will need to fall upon the rock and be broken to pieces.

A year and a half after telling me I had a brick of shame, the Lord showed me that I also had a wall of defense (self-protection) which kept people out and kept me from ever being able to receive the love that God wanted to show me through the people He had provided for my life. This in-turn left me feeling lonely all the

time. No matter what situation I was in or what group of people I was with, I was lonely since there was this big empty space between me and others created by my wall of self-protection. Others would come up to this wall, try to stick their heads over, try and find a way in or around, kick it, hit it, crash into it, but there was no access. My gates were securely locked and this kept me safe (so I thought). My cornerstone for this wall was justice. This kept me in a place where I could clearly see the injustice of all that ever happened to me, which of course gave me reason for the wall. I was my own defense, my own protection, my own judge, and I had my own standard of justice. Accordingly, Jesus could not be the provision for my life in these areas because I was my own provision.

Thankfully, He got sick of this dynamic; He wanted to be my defense, my protection, my shelter, and my justice—just as He promised. So He set up a situation to allow the penetration of my defenses which would eventually lead to the undoing of this whole self-protective system. He knew the one spot where my wall was weak and He planned the perfect attack to assail my walls. In so doing, He showed me that behind my self-protection, behind my justice, was deep rooted shame. You see, subconsciously, I lived between two dynamics that were always at tension and impacted everything I did. These two dynamics were a result of years and years of generational sin—the worthless inheritance that was handed down to me by my forefathers which the Spirit mentioned in **1:18**. On-the-one-hand, the greatest value that had been communicated to me was personal goodness; and, on-the-other-hand, the greatest failure was being bad; and there was no in between. You were good and thereby valued and honored in the family, or you were bad and were a disappointment, a failure, and one who

did not live up to family expectations. Those who failed were shamed on many emotional and practical levels. The scars on either side of this good child/bad child ethic go so deep into my soul, as it does those in my family.

Without even knowing, I adopted this family ethic and being good was everything to me. If I thought that you thought I was bad in any way clearly that meant you did not understand me and have unjustly judged me. If you knew me, you would know that I am good and even if I did things that were considered to be kind of bad, my motives were good (or at least mostly good when compared to your motives). And if only you understood that about me, you would not treat me the way you do. But since you don't really know me, understand me, and choose to treat me poorly, then I must protect myself from you; hence my wall.

Over the years, God put me in so many unjust situations, patently unjust, to try and wake me up to this dynamic and induce me to fall upon the rock; but all it did was irritate me and give me more reasons to dive into my own goodness and self-protection. However, I was never truly safe or secure behind my walls; it was a ruse. If anyone ever thought badly about me, it would eat me alive inside and terrorize my soul. This dynamic gave people so much power over me it was ridiculous. What I thought defended me locked me a cage of personal anguish.

And it goes without saying that my standard of goodness was not God's standard, since only God is truly good. However, it was based on my comparative goodness, which due to my self-control, discipline, and the circumstances I found myself in with some very bad people, it was pretty remarkable if I say so myself. But my self-contained system of protection could only stay intact to the extent I was able to continue to be, in my mind, good. If I was ever proved to be bad,

exposed, the shame would be too much to bear. After all, I could not handle having others treat me as a disappointment and as one who did not live up to the family expectations. I saw what would happen to those who failed and I did not want that to be my life.

Naturally, these fears lead me to a lifetime of lies, deceit, and the covering up of things. That is what we do right? We learn this behavior from childhood and it seems we don't really grow out of it. In fact, it is just the opposite; we grow increasingly proficient at living this lie. You see, shame is a powerful construct in our psyche and it is endemic to the human condition.

Now, when God arranged for my walls to be assailed, He knew what would crumble my self-control and discipline; and even though I had plenty of reasons for my choices, and plenty of places to point my finger, I could never fully justify my actions. I had to stand up and actually own my choices; it was embarrassing, humiliating, and I was put to shame. I was afraid that my worst fears of being one who is "bad" would come to fruition. It shook me to the core; it was an earthquake in my life. But what I came to realize—and God's whole point of assailing my system—is that this was not about my failure or disappointment; rather, it was about my need to live the truth. The problem is that I knew truth that I never made my truth; I had the knowledge, but I never adopted that knowledge into my way of living. And when I tell you this truth, I am afraid that like me you will let this truth breeze by your minds. After all, you have heard it before and I know you agree with it; but I have to say that I don't think you live it. Shame keeps you from truly adopting this truth.

The truth is: only God is good (***Luke 18:19; Matthew 19:17***). See, I can tell you

think you know what I am going to say; but please stay with me. Only God is good is one of the most powerful yet resisted truths in the Bible. It means that we are not good, never have been good, and never will be good. Our “goodness” is a mythology that was started with the original lie told to Eve by Satan in the Garden. This lie has since been perpetuated throughout history culminating in the ethic that we are essentially ok, we don’t really need help, we can figure it out, we are mankind and we will prevail because when all is said and done we are essentially good. You can listen to any modern philosophical rhetoric, political speech, emerging church philosophy or liberal discourse and this ethic of human goodness is always at the center; it is our highest value.

Theologically, as believers, we can intellectually assent to the fact that we are sinners and are in total need for God’s mercy and grace; but practically we don’t live that way because we only kind of agree with this truth. We know we are not good enough to go to heaven, so we all agree we need Jesus’ help for that feat. But when it comes down to our practical human relationships, we fight for our ethic of goodness—even our comparative goodness. We don’t want to bear the shame of not being good and having others think ill or less of us. This fight shows itself in all sorts of twisted ways. For example, we cloak ourselves with failure and condemnation because we still believe we could have and should have been good in a given situation. Similarly, when someone does not do to us the goodness that we expect, we justify hurting them, saying and doing horrible things to them, because we feel the things we say and do are comparatively not as bad as what they have said or done to us. We argue our positions, we justify our attitudes and behaviors, and we position one person against another, because when it’s all said



and done, we think we are right, good, or at least better than others.

It is a sick survival mechanism that afflicts everyone. No one wants to be exposed and live in the shame of their failure and inability; so we don't. This is the deceit, the hypocrisy, the lie that the Spirit asked us in **2:1** to always make the choice from deep within our souls to put away or remove from our lives. Our ethic of goodness is a fallacy, a fiction, a literal impossibility. Just read **Romans 1-3**, it spells it all out. But our shame keeps us bound to this lie. We fight so hard to prove ourselves, we fight so hard to manipulate and manage what others think of us, we fight so hard to convince ourselves that we are ok and are good; and our shame is at the root of it all.

There is something so deep in the soul of humanity that incessantly fights accepting the reality that we are sick, selfish, and depraved human beings; no one does good, not a single one (**Romans 3:12**, quoting **Psalm 14:1-3**). The Spirit however is calling us to live as ones who are always believing this truth; thus, He wants us to choose, as a way of life, to continually put away the lie, the deceit, and the hypocrisy. The Spirit is calling for us to dismantle our walls of self-protection and defense. The Spirit is calling for us to lay on the altar, as a spiritual sacrifice, our sense of justice. The Spirit wants us to adopt a new ethic for our lives: only God is good. We know this truth but we must now live this truth. There is no "should have," "would have," or "could have." And once you remove those fictions from your life, you can live without the bondage of justice, shame, failure, condemnation, and so on.

Let me clarify, accepting this truth does not mean that we are to give ourselves to the darkness, selfishness, and evil that lies within our soul. May it never be!

How shall we who died to sin still live in it (**Romans 6:2**)? Rather, living this truth is intended to help us accept and live another truth: *we can have God's goodness*. We are in desperate need for His goodness in every part of our lives, in every personal interaction, in every thought and deed. In fact, true Christianity is about complete substitution—a full exchange. We must put our goodness on the altar and let it burn in exchange for His goodness. We already studied this in **1:15-16** where we are commanded: “like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." This is a command that can only be fulfilled by Christ in us. We cannot go and be holy; it is impossible. Clearly, all our attempts at fulfilling this passage have failed miserably. This can only be our reality when we buy into the need for a complete exchange where His life is lived in and through ours. This is accomplished by now believing or trusting and falling on the rock.

This is a precious truth of value for those who are now believing. And the reason we will not be put to shame is because Jesus has literally made it possible for us to have His life. You see, Jesus never expected us to be good like Him; He only has ever wanted to be our goodness. Jesus was put on public display and was shamed for us. He hung on the cross in order that He might remove our shame and give us the ability to share in His goodness. In so doing, He ironically placed the shame on all our enemies. Yes, they have been shamed in our place and made to be utter fools. You see, despite our abject inability to be good, we can live as sons of God, as aliens on this earth who share His nature that is righteous, holy, and true (**Ephesians 4:24**), but they can't; they can never know His goodness.

Yet, in an attempt to shame us, the accuser still points out every one of our

failures; but it is to no avail. He has been disarmed and his accusations made powerless. Jesus took his weapons of accusation away and his charges now fall to the ground like dust, for they have no place to land in the mind or heart of God. ***Colossians 2:13-15*** says that when Jesus hung on the cross, He took every bit of our badness, failure, disappointment, and everything about which we could ever be ashamed, and nailed it to the cross. Thus, the accuser has no more power or authority over us; our shame has been removed. And Jesus has replaced our old way of life of shame with the ability to walk in His Spirit and be like Him.

The enemy however has kept us locked in an illusion of shame by tricking us to believe that we “should have” or “could have” been good. But it is such a lie. We could not be good and we cannot be good, so we need to stop fighting for our goodness and accept the precious truth that Jesus provided for us another way of living—that of an alien. Jesus wants us to live as sons of God. He wants us to be honest about our total, complete, and abject need for His goodness in every part of our lives so we can live a life without shame. That is why we must, without hesitation, put away the malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and lies.

Besides, for those of us who are now believing, we must remember that we are in the process of being conformed into the image of Christ. That means we are going to fail; failure is a necessary part of our learning our need for Christ. So in your failure, turn to Him; throw yourself on Him. Stop turning inward relying on all your ridiculous self-protective coping mechanisms; they just reinforce the shame from which you have been delivered and keep the worthless inheritance you have received from your forefathers alive. Reject that worthless set of beliefs and embrace your need for Jesus all the time in everything. Accept the exchange!

Choose to fall on the rock and be broken to pieces. You will find that you will not be put to shame; rather, you will find the power of a new life and I guarantee that you will experience abundant freedom and joy when this system of shame is dismantled.

How many of you know **1 Corinthians 10:13** where it says: “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” If you have not yet figured it out, the way of escape is always the same. It is not found in trying to manage, manipulate, or control your failure; rather, it is by choosing to trust that Jesus has what you need for your abject inability. He is the choice stone; He has it all. You don’t need to let your shame produce gross abnormalities in your life which produce more shame. Choose to see things from His perspective, adopt His perspective, throw yourself upon Him, and live His perspective.

This is what it means to be an alien. Others are in a perpetual conquest to be validated, to earn their keep, to prove their worth, to be right, and to be good, thereby giving everyone a reason why they must be accepted and loved. Yet, at the same time they are always fighting the shame of their humanity; and this goes for Christians and non-Christians alike. In contrast, we can let go of this futile endeavor and refuse to listen to the lies of the enemy and participate in his system of shame. We can stop trying to be validated, worthy, and good. Instead, we can accept our inability knowing that is why we must choose to live in the Spirit all the time, for any time we spend living in our flesh is useless. Keep in mind, even if we don’t think we are doing anything bad, the reality is if what

comes from our lives is not directly sourced from the Spirit of God, then it is not good (again, only God is good). I don't care if you are serving God and doing all manner of religious activities, even using your spiritual gifts, if what you do does not derive from the Spirit of God, it is not good.

Accept this truth; it is the pathway to freedom and the very reason why those who are now believing will not be put to shame. God has made you alive in Christ, He has redeemed you from the inheritance of your forefathers for you have been born again of imperishable seed, you have been sprinkled with His blood, and you are protected by the power of God; it is now time to live that life. You are an alien, you are a son of God, and you can be broken and free. "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone," and He who is now believing will not be put to shame.

In closing, I must exhort you to fall on the rock and be broken. And then fall on it again and again and again. With each break will come an unleashing of His power and freedom in your life. It is worth it. I have experienced a whole new level of peace now that I am not always trying to protect myself and hide my shame. Likewise, if you are willing to exchange your goodness for His goodness and your shame for the truth, you will not be disappointed. You will come to know what it means to be a son of God, a living stone, a holy priest, and a member of a spiritual house. Again, you will not be disappointed. That is however a contingent promise (it is in the *subjunctive*): it requires you to fall and fall and fall on the rock now believing that He is everything you need for life and godliness. I have cleared the way, paved the path, shown you that it is a safe pathway to travel; and it is now time for you to follow.

Believe me, I understand; being broken is never easy for it takes wounding, and we all seem to be quite averse to being injured. But the Lord is only breaking off what is not necessary—the enemies in your life that are keeping you from experiencing His peace, rest, and joy. And the end result is always glorious; always! Let's read ***Isaiah 30:25-26*** and I want you to consider that your “enemies” are your shame and false sense of goodness—the lie in which you have lived.

***Isaiah 30:25-26***

In that day, when your enemies are slaughtered and the towers fall, there will be streams of water flowing down every mountain and hill. The moon will be as bright as the sun, and the sun will be seven times brighter—like the light of seven days in one! So it will be when the Lord begins to heal his people and cure the wounds he gave them.

He will heal the wounds He inflicts and you will know His joy and freedom. Every part of life will seem lighter, brighter, and more glorious. Fall on the choice and precious cornerstone believing and you will not be put to shame.

Let's Pray