

(The Names of Jesus) 12. The Corner

by A.B. Simpson

Transcript

“Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow.” (Zech. 10: 4.) The reference of this verse is to the tribe of Judah, out of which was to come the corner, the nail and the battle bow. This may have referred, in the first instance, to earthly kings and defenders; but, undoubtedly, their ultimate typical application was to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to Him indeed the same figures are elsewhere applied so explicitly as to leave no doubt as to the Scriptural validity of this interpretation.

The Corner

This metaphor is directly applied to the Lord Jesus Christ by the apostle Peter in the second chapter of his first epistle, verses 4-7, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, you also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believes 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.”

1. The corner stone is the foundation of the building. It rests upon it. So Christ is our Foundation. There we rest our hopes for eternity and for everything. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

2. The corner stone regulates the entire building. From the corner stone all other locations and measurements are taken. So Christ gives direction to all our life. Everything should be shaped with reference to Him as the Center. We can build no broader than the foundation and corner, and so our lives can never pass beyond Christ, but simply be the filling up of that which He has already in Him. The plumb line falls until it reaches the corner stone, and the walls must be ever vertical to it or they will fall. Our whole Christian life must be under the absolute control of the Lord Jesus, and both in its lateral and vertical lines, as it reaches toward others and touches heaven, it must be according to His mind and will, His Spirit and holy example.

3. The corner stone unites the building. Without it there can be only one wall, and a wall is not a building. It is in Jesus that we touch each other and become united in our Christian life and in our inmost spirit. A common creed will never unite us; a common work will not permanently unite us; only a common life will. The true secret of catholicity in the church is to live closer to Jesus. A deep spiritual life will always sweep away the consciousness, at least, of sectarian barriers. If we would love each other and be closely united,

let us be filled with His love, and pressing hard to His bosom, we shall touch each other in the sweetest fellowship of Christian life.

4. The corner stone bears the record of the building. The name is upon the stone, and so we should bear the name of Jesus, and no name be seen but His. The date is there, and, although the stone was laid long before the finishing of the building, yet the edifice always bears the date of the stone. So the true date of our salvation is Calvary and the resurrection. It was then that we died with Him; it was then that we rose with Him; it was then that our salvation, our healing, our redemption was finished; and we simply receive the completed work of Christ. And so the story of the building is written upon His hands, His feet, and His heart, and the eternal recompenses will be given according to the inscriptions that He holds.

5. The corner stone is the ornamental stone of the building. It is often made of polished granite or marble, or still more precious material, and it is the object of observation and the ornament of the structure. So Jesus bears the glory. Unto you, therefore, who believe, He is precious, or literally, is for an ornament. We are not to bear the praise or the glory, or to decorate ourselves with the insignia of human grandeur, but to be hidden upon His bosom and to hold Him up before the world as our honor and our praise, ever crying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be . . . unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Not I, but Christ, be honored, praised, exalted; Not I, but Christ, be seen, be known, be heard. Not I, but Christ, in every look and motion; Not I, but Christ, in every thought and word. Oh, to be saved from myself, dear Lord, Oh, to be lost in Thee; Oh, that it might be no more I, But Christ that lives in me. The Nail

In the twenty-second chapter of Isaiah this figure is more fully referred to: "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons."

In the third chapter of Revelation this passage is quoted by the Lord Jesus with respect to Himself: "These things says he that is holy, . . . he that has the key of David, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens."

The passage here refers directly to Christ, and it is in this passage that He is called the "nail fastened in the sure place," on which is to be hung all the glory of the Father's house. There are two special uses of a nail. The first is to secure and fasten, and so Christ is the security of our hopes and lives. He keeps us by His intercession, by His life, by our union with Himself. Second, a nail is to hang things upon, and this is the special sense in which it is here used. The Father has hung everything upon Jesus. All the glory of the Father's house is upon Him. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father," He says. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand." There is no attribute of power, wisdom or love in God which Jesus does not fully possess, and has not the right to communicate to us to use for our well-being. But not only has the Father hung everything upon Him, but He can hang all our graces upon Him. We are not to hang them upon ourselves. We do not and never shall possess anything of ourselves. It is not that we are to add our virtues to our own person, but we are to take Christ to be in our hearts "as a nail fastened in the sure place," and then upon Him we may hang the faith, the love, the peace, the gentleness, the patience, and all the graces of spirit, until our heart becomes a wardrobe with a thousand dresses ready for use as we need them in each new situation and act of life.

The figure represents the nail as bearing upon it, not only all the glory of the Father's house, but the offspring and the issue, and all vessels, both the small vessels and vessels of flagons. The offspring and issue have reference, perhaps, to our being born of Him as His very offspring and issue, and fastened to Him by ties of blood and life; or it may refer to our offspring and issue, our spiritual fruit, all of which we must receive through Him, for our power is not our own, but is hung upon Christ, and all our work must be handed over to Him and kept by Him as the nail on which we leave every precious thing. The vessels and flagons hung upon this nail have reference to the various needs of life, all of which are supplied from Him. On this blessed nail are hanging cups of every size, which we can fill, and from which we can drink whenever we are thirsty, and there is no want so small but we can find it met in His name, and life, and love. The flagons, or vessels of wine, refer to the deeper joys, blessings of our communion with Him. As there is no cup too small for Him to fill, so there is no need too deep, no joy too divine for Him to satisfy.

The sure place in which this nail is fastened has reference to the certainty and security of the blessing which we have in Christ. All else is liable to fail, but that which we hang upon Him will stand forever. The confidences we repose in others and ourselves are fragile, but this only can never be removed. This hope is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.

First, this nail has been fastened into the cross of Calvary, where our salvation was completed.

Second, this nail has been fastened into the throne in the ascension and resurrection of Christ, guaranteeing our complete salvation.

Third, it may be fastened in our hearts as the very essence and substance of our inmost life, a life so certain, a keeping so infinite and divine, that we can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

There are two ways of fastening a nail. One is to drive a cut nail into the wood and just leave it. The other is to take a wrought nail made of malleable iron and drive it through and a little beyond, and then clinch it. This kind of work never draws, and this is the sort of nail that Christ is when truly taken in the committal of faith.

Christ has clinched the nail on His side. "I will give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." This is the nail driven; but listen, "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." That is the nail clinched.

The Battle Bow

The first thing suggested by the bow is that Christ is the spring of our lives. If you want a spirit that sweeps the heavens and reaches out into the infinite possibilities of God's boundlessness, take Christ to dwell in your heart.

Next, the figure suggests defense. Christ is our defense against the enemy, but we have to use Him as you would use a bow. A bow lying on the ground is of no use. A bow unstrung is of no use; but you must take it and draw the string, and pull the bow, and shoot the arrow, and your enemies shall fall with every shaft. Again, the bow suggests an arrow. The bow is useless without an arrow. The arrows are God's promises and our prayers, pointed by definite desires, directed by the will of God, winged by faith and holy expectation, and then sent forth with the strong hand and the full momentum of the faith of God to reach

the heavens and the uttermost parts of our needs and our difficulties.

We have a beautiful example of these arrows in the thirteenth chapter of Second Kings. The great prophet of Israel was dying, and Joash, his grateful king, came to visit him, and cried, as he knelt beside him, "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." Then Elisha proceeded to give the king some expression and evidence of his real help, stronger than mere words. He bade him take a bow and arrows that were lying by his side, and, putting his hands alongside the king's he commanded him to pull the string to its utmost tension and shoot an arrow; as it sped away into the fields beyond, he cried, "The arrow of the LORD's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for you shall smite the Syrians in Aphek, until you have consumed them." But this was not enough. He must take up the arrows and prove for himself the strength and completeness of his faith, and so the prophet bids him strike upon the ground. He does it three times, and then stops. The old prophet looks grave and angry. "You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have struck Syria until you had consumed it: but now you shall strike Syria only three times." He had only taken half a blessing, and that was all that he would have.

As we take the bow of faith, there is another hand that holds and guides it. Let us not fear to pull the string to its utmost tension, for this bow will never break. Christ is the battle bow, and His hand is pulling the string with ours, and we can have all we dare to claim. Let the arrow be very definite, and then let us not stop until we have covered the whole circle of possible need and blessing, and He will be only too glad to give us all we dare to claim, and grieved only because we take so little. May the Lord help us to know "the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

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