

Series: Isaiah
Title: Precious Stones for Precious Stones
Text: Isaiah 54: 11-14
Date: April 20, 2014
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This is the LORD God our Redeemer speaking. The one spoken to is his church.

Isaiah 54: 11: O thou afflicted, [poor, lowly, needy] **tossed with tempest**, [as a ship tossed on the waves of troubled sea by fierce winds] **and not comforted**,...

This applies to Christ's church, to each believer in particular, in so many ways: this was the early church's condition: afflicted: by persecutors within and without, tossed with tempests: false preachers, false doctrines—Christ gave his preachers why? Ephesians 4: 14: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; The early church was not comforted—the church's only comfort was internal, spiritual, from Christ our Head in Spirit. This applies to a local body of believers. There are times when we face troublesome times together as the Lord's family. Our only comfort is Christ. This describes us, personally, when Christ first called us and there are times when it is our experience as believers, now: afflicted: by our troublesome, sinful flesh; tossed: with doubts, fears, unbelief; not comforted: by anything in our flesh, not by any of our works; not by friends or family; not by this world; our only comfort is Christ our Savior.

Proposition: In this passage the Lord Jesus declares to his church what he promises to do in us through the preaching of the gospel of Christ and him crucified.

Application: Have you noticed once again, in two different books, we find the same work of Christ being performed to his people? Ephesians 4: 12-16, and this passage, both show us the exact same work that Christ is accomplishing in his church. Ephesians 4 shows us in a more clear way, while this uses metaphors to paint us a picture. But both passages declare the work the Lord Jesus is doing in his church, in our hearts, through the preaching of the gospel of Christ and him crucified.

TITLE: Precious Stones for Precious Stones

I. FIRST, CHRIST SAYS—Isaiah 54: 11...behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours,...

I Will

First, notice, Christ says, **"I will lay;"** in verse 12 he says, "I will make." When he walked this earth, Christ Jesus was looked down upon as the lowly carpenter's son, but Christ is God, the great Architect and Builder of his church, the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb 11: 10)

Living Stones

Then notice, Christ says, **"I will lay thy stones"**. Christ creates sinners new in spirit, making us living stones. He sets us immovable in his church and temple.

1 Peter 2:5: Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Also, we will see in this passage that these “stones” include every precious gift Christ gives to build us up as living stones—his preachers, each article of doctrine, the light he gives, the entrance he gives and all his works of providence—these are described here as precious stones for his living stones. Christ says, ‘I will lay thy stones.’”

The Means

Now, notice, Christ says, “I will lay thy stones **with fair colors.**” The Hebrew word “with” refers to the means. This whole phrase refers to an ancient custom of laying colored stones in black pavement to make a mosaic. The pavement was black, so that the stones stood out against a black backdrop. The stones are Christ, his works and his final workmanship (his people); the means he uses to set us “with” is the black pavement. The means are not meant to be the focus; but he chose means which make Christ, his works, and his workmanship stand out, so that he receives all the glory. So the meaning is, “I will lay thy stones using means that give me all the glory.” All the precious stones—the person and work of Christ—by which Christ makes sinners living stones, stand out against the black backdrop of our sin.

Illustration: You’ve heard the illustration and seen jewelers do this: they lay the diamonds on a black cloth and the diamond shines so much brighter.

You and I see Christ’s glory and grace shine more brilliantly the more we see the black sin we are and from which he saved us! The last Adam came, NOT into a perfect garden—but to a dark, sin-cursed world; not made under one law but made under all the law which God gave to show the blackness of our sins; not to put away one sin but a multitude of black transgressions; not for one sinner but for a multitude of black-hearted sinners; the Pearl of great price shines in brilliance against those three hours of darkness on the cross! “I will lay thy stones using means that give me all the glory.”

Also, the Hebrew word translated “fair colors” is a black die which women used as eyeliner. The same word is translated “paint” when Jezebel painted her face—her eyes.

Illustration: Ladies, you outline the top and bottom eyelid with black eyeliner. The black is not meant to be seen. It is used to enhance the beauty of the eye—the eye standouts against the black background.

In Ephesians 4, Christ’s ministers are used by Christ to preach his gospel for the calling out his people. Christ says, “I will set thy stones using foolish things to confound the wise, weak things to confound the mighty, base nothings to bring to nothing things that are—that no flesh should glory in my presence, but he that glories, let him glory in the LORD.” (1 Cor 1: 27-31)

Christ’s preachers are to be unseen, unnoticed—the earthen vessels that Christ uses so that the beauty and the work is all Christ’s. We preach not our word but Christ’s word; we set Christ before his people, not ourselves but Christ; we declare Christ finished the work of redemption for his people—we do not put the work in the sinner’s hands to finish. Christ uses his preachers but we are the black, unnoticed eyeliner. Christ says, “I will set thy stones using means that gives me all the glory!”

Illustration: You ladies know that if you put on too much of that black eyeliner then the eyeliner becomes the focus rather than the eye.

So it is with the preacher. The moment a preacher ceases to declare the gospel of Christ according to the scriptures. The moment he puts focus on the sinner and the sinner’s works; the moment he markets to the people the church’s ministry rather than Christ and his ministry then immediately Christ ceases to be the

focus. But Christ's preacher, and his church, wants only Christ, in all his glory, to be the focus! But to those who don't need Christ, God's preachers are just sooty and black. But catch this!

II. CHRIST SAYS SECONDLY—Isaiah 54: 11:...and [I will] lay thy foundations with sapphires.

Christ Preachers are Sapphires

One "foundation" included in this "foundations" is the gospel—Christ in the doctrine which we preach.

Illustration: The Jews called the articles of their religion "foundations."

Christ uses his preachers to lay Christ our Foundation in the gospel we preach.

Ephesians 2:20: [We] are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

Paul said,

1 Corinthians 3: 10: According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11: For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The preachers Christ uses to set forth the foundation—Christ in the doctrine of the good news—are unseen, nobodies—not desiring any glory for themselves—but to Christ—and to sinner's hungry for Christ—they are "sapphires." (Rev 21: 14, 19) Christ said, "I will set thy stones with nobodies, [but to Christ and his people, he said, And I will] lay thy foundations with sapphires."

Illustration: There have been times I was so hungry to hear a word from my Redeemer—as soon as God spoke into my heart through the preaching of the gospel—I thanked my God and Savior—and I thanked him for the preacher who loved me enough to preach Christ rather than himself. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach?" [no...that] preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Illustration: Man asked my occupation: "I deal in precious jewels!"

Christ in the Doctrine we Preach

But more than the preachers being sapphires, the sapphires in this foundation is Christ himself: the everlasting love of God our Father in Christ, eternal election in Christ; the everlasting covenant of grace ordered in all things and sure in Christ; the sure mercies of Christ our David. All the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus

The sapphires of this foundation is Christ's Deity declared in the teaching. This is the good news of the doctrine. God the Son joined with bone of my bones and flesh and of my flesh, the GodMan Mediator.

The sapphires of the doctrine of Christ is his perfect obedience, his blood and his righteousness; his death, burial, resurrection; justification by his righteousness; pardon by his blood, atonement by his sacrifice,

The sapphires of this foundation are spelled T.U.L.I.P: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, preservation/perseverance of the saints

Christ is the believer's one foundation. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 cor 3: 11) Before we can stand firmly in the truth of God we must have the foundation in truth. And if this foundation is even preached in truth—Christ gets the glory! He said, "I will lay thy foundations with sapphires."

III. THIRDLY, CHRIST SAYS—Isaiah 54: 12: And I will make thy windows of agates,...

It is not enough simply for the gospel to be preached in truth—Christ has to lay the foundation in our hearts. Like a foundation hidden deep in the earth, this foundation is hidden deep in the word of God until Christ lays it in our heart.

John 6:63: It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Blind in Sin

We come into this world totally blind in sin: no spiritual light could shine in, we were only darkness. We are led astray by cunning deceivers. Their doctrine is dark speeches. The scriptures are darkness to us. We are blind in sins by birth. But Christ says, "**I will make thy windows—thy light—of "agates."**—"like a sparkling gem." In the creation of this world, when Christ said "Let there be light", there was light. So it is in the new creation in his people.

2 Corinthians 4: 3: But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 5: For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 6: For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Windows and Agates

An "agate" is not fully transparent. At first, we are like the man given sight who said, "I see men as trees," And at best—"For now we see through a glass, darkly;" (Mk 8: 24; 1 Cor.13:13; Song of Sol.2:9) But Christ is the Window. The word means "Sun rising". Christ is the Sun of Righteousness who arises with healing in his wings—the Light—by which the sinner is made to see God's glory in Christ. (Mal 4: 2) He says, "I will make thy sun rise as agates"—as a sparkling gem.

Illustration: The gospel of Christ is like diamond with its many faces. Christ is our Light and Christ is the sparkling diamond.

In our limited state, all we can see and take in is one face of the diamond at a time. Today, we are looking at this face; Tuesday night Bro. Cody will show us another face of the diamond. It is this way so that we always have to depend upon Christ, "I will make thy light as a sparkling gem."

IV. FOURTHLY, CHRIST SAYS, Isaiah 54: 12:...and thy gates of carbuncles,...

Gates and Carbuncles

A gate gives us entrance and a "Carbuncle" is a blood-red, sparkling gem. Webster says when held up to the sun it looks like a red-hot, flaming piece of coal. When Christ made Isaiah's windows as agates, he saw the Lord in all his glory—holy, holy, holy—

Isaiah 6:5: Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6: Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7: And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

When Christ lays the foundation of sapphires in our heart through the preaching of the gospel, when the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings to give us light to see him shimmering in all his glory, through those gates of carbuncle the Holy Spirit touches our lips with the blood-red burning coal directly from Christ our Altar and you find peace with God through Christ Jesus! Immediately the blood-drenched gates of carbuncle are opened in heaven and we have full access into his presence—heart to heart and mouth to mouth with our God.

Road to Emmaus

When Christ spoke into their hearts, the gates of carbuncle were opened. They said, “Did not our heart burn within us!” When he makes us see our sins are forgiven, when he says, “In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee....their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD” (Is 54: 14; 17) then he opens the gates to us and we have peace with God! It is so when you first believe, in every trial and in every hour need. The Door—the Gate—is the blood of the Lamb! God’s comfort comes into our hearts through the blood red gate of carbuncle—the blood of Jesus Christ. And we are received into God’s presence through that same “blood red gate.”

V. LASTLY—THIS BECOMES OUR CASE FROM THEN ON--Christ says, **Isaiah 54: 12:...and** [I will lay] **all thy borders of pleasant stones.**

Providential Dealings

Christ’s providential dealings with us are the **borders** which accompany his inward mercies—all pleasant, precious stones!

All foundations will be tried! The wisdom, will and works of the flesh are not a foundation of sapphires—that is wood, hay, and stubble. Vain foundations are NOT laid by Christ but by conceited sinners. (Mk 4: 14-20)

The dry ground hearers hear the word. But Christ did not lay the foundation. Immediately, he finds the stones of his borders are not pleasant to him; immediately, the devil steals away the seed of the gospel.

Stony ground hearers, hear the word, and with joy receive it; yet he has not root in himself. Christ has not laid the foundation in his heart. He endures for a while. But when the trial comes: tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended. The stones of his border are not precious to him!

Thorny ground hearers foundation has not been laid with sapphires in his heart. Christ has not given windows of agates. The gates of carbuncle have not been opened. So when the trial comes: the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke out the word. The providential stones of his border are not pleasant to him!

But those built on the foundation of sapphires which Christ laid, those whose windows are agates, those to whom he has opened the gates of carbuncle, when the trial comes—when the stones of his border are laid by

Christ—Christ his Foundation makes him able to endure storm and fire! Not only that, but he sees the stones of his border—the stones of trial—as precious stones: needful, for his good, to keep him ever near to Christ. He says,

1 Peter 1: 6: Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

All the daily events of the believer's life—every family trial, every trial in our various employments, every tear and every joy—these are the outer borders of stones. Yet they are all of Christ's appointment and all of Christ's working. Therefore they are all pleasant stones

Christ describes his church being built up and adorned with precious jewels: "sapphires, agates, carbuncles, pleasant stones." The Holy Spirit compared the doctrine of the gospel of Christ to precious stones, "If any man build on this foundation, "gold, silver, precious stones." (1 Cor 3: 12) In case we are not convinced this is all accomplished through the preaching of the gospel, Christ assures us, with this promise:

Isaiah 54: 13: And all thy children *shall be* taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

All the elect of God shall experience this same work of grace in their hearts. But what is this peace? Christ tells us.

John 6:45: It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto **ME**.

Christ himself is our great Peace, our Righteousness, our All! This is what the world of religion does not understand! All God's preacher has to do for Christ's people is preach the gospel of Christ. Let the world have millstones, we want the sapphires!

Job 23: 12:...I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

John 6: 66: From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. 67: Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68: Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. [the precious stones] 69: And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Amen!