

April 21

**Isaiah 54: 11: O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.**

The Lord Jesus Christ says to his afflicted, tossed and comfortless church, "Behold, I will." 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)

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. "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." (1 Pet 2: 5) Also, the "stones" Christ uses to save his people include every precious gift Christ gives to build us up as living stones including—his preachers (fair colors & sapphires) each article of doctrine (sapphires), the light he gives (windows of agates), the entrance he gives (gates of carbuncle) and all his works of providence (borders of pleasant stones)—these are described here as precious stones for his precious stones.

Next, Christ says, "I will lay thy stones with fair colors." The Hebrew word "with" refers to the means. This 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 by which Christ makes sinners living stones, stand out against the black backdrop of our sin. As jewelers lay the diamond on a black cloth so 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. 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. 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, 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; we declare Christ finished the work of redemption for his people but we never 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!"

But 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!

Now, to those who don't need Christ, God's preachers are just sooty and black. But catch this! Christ says, "and [I will] lay thy foundations with sapphires." The "foundations" is Christ in the doctrine which we preach. The Jews called the articles of their religion "foundations." Christ uses his preachers to lay Christ our Foundation in the foundations of each article of the doctrine of Christ. (Eph 2:20; 1 Cor 3: 10-11) The preachers Christ uses to lay the foundation are indeed unseen, nobodies, not desiring any glory for themselves but for that very reason, to Christ, and to sinner's hungry for Christ, they are "sapphires." (Rev 21: 14, 19) 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 Savior and I thanked Christ for the preacher who loved me enough to preach Christ rather than himself. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach?" No! "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

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 are Christ's Deity declared; 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 stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires."