

## CRUSHED ROCKS

Rocks are fascinating and very impressive.  
And yes, they can be annoying and a nuisance, too.

*I've been doing some digging around my place, and I've encountered a lot of rocks right where I didn't want them.*

Nevertheless, they are amazing and often beautiful, and because of their hardness, strength and durability they are useful.

The advance of civilization is related to the availability of rocks.

Most are very hard.

The Mohs hardness scale for rocks goes from 1 to 10.

Talc is the softest, so soft a finger nail can scratch it. Marble ranges from 3-5, depending on the type, and that is why it's used in sculptures and buildings—it is soft enough to carve and shape.

Granite and the other rocks that “get in our way” have a hardness of 6.

Quartz, common in many rocks and sand is 7.

Rubies and Sapphires are 9, and diamonds are the hardest at 10.

Even though rocks can be very hard, they still can be cut, fractured or abraded—worn down. And, that is why they come in all shapes and sizes. Some are huge,.... like the one right where my *garden was going to be*. Some are jagged, and some are round and smooth.

The best rocks for skipping across the water are smooth and flat.

Rocks helped separate humans from beasts, as rocks became early tools for cutting and starting fires by those wise enough to see the potential and to remember the results.

Rocks were used and continue to be used for structures.

The strongest and the most enduring buildings, such as monuments, churches and fortresses were made from rocks labouriously cut hauled, cut to shape, and lifted into place.

The great pyramids are one example. The huge cut blocks that form the wailing wall in Jerusalem, a remnant of the third temple that the Romans could not completely destroy in the year 70, is another example of how strong rock buildings are.

Therefore, it is not surprising that when the Psalmist was in need of God's undeniable strength and steadfastness, God was asked to be as a rock fortress. Refuge / protection can be found behind the stout, strong rock wall of a fortress.

To those broken and in need of sanctuary, God can be like a rock fortress.

Rocks can get in the way and break equipment when they lurk unseen. Rocks skip across the water, they can cut and chip things; they can be used to build safe and lasting structures,..... and they can be projected.

The least cerebral method for using a rock is to simply throw it. It does Not require much in the way of intelligence to pick up a stone and hurl it at something or someone, and that simple thinking is the difference between a beast and a cultured, rational human.

Advanced and nobler thinkers would see creative potential in a rock, instead of something to toss in order to destroy.

*Bullets and shrapnel are merely fancier rocks that are tossed to destroy.*

The Acts passages presents Stephen as the recipient of people being stupid with rocks. Stephen was stoned to death.

Stephen was part of the new wave of Christians. The church was shifting away from its Jewish tradition and connections, and the Jewish leaders didn't like the "new" things that Stephen was preaching. They perceived the changes as rejection of the what they held dear, and instead of searching for creative accommodation and compassionate tolerance, they picked up stone fragments and hurled them at the symbol of what they despised – Stephen.

Killing the spokesperson or even the leader does NOT kill the message or the problem, but..... most of us still haven't learned that lesson, yet.

Stephen was wiser than that—thanks to God's Spirit. Instead of blaming the stone throwers, Stephen asks God to forgive them.

Broken rocks were picked up and thrown, and they simply rested in another location, albeit a blood stained location.

A few years later, the Epistle of I Peter refers to broken rocks in a very different manner. At this point, the church was developing in the post temple era—a time when Jews were emigrating elsewhere, and their influence was waning.

Many Christians still missed the notion of a strong fortress like temple as the representative of God's mighty presence on earth. Even though Christianity was losing it's Jewish flavour, it was still reassuring to think of the temple in Jerusalem as a reference point.

Therefore the I Peter 2 passage presents Jesus as the cornerstone of a new type of temple – a temple made of believers in Christ.

The passage is a vision of hope and a blueprint for how to be a church that is only Christ centred.

When building are made of rocks, the rocks are intricately and cleverly layered to interconnect with each other... so as to share the load and to lock together for stability. The first rock, sets the pattern. All other rocks tie / connect / depend on that first rock. The structure forms its pattern from that first rock,... which is called the cornerstone.

In brick and masonry construction, the cornerstone is mostly just a symbolic rock or brick, but that is not the case in stone buildings.

*When I was in charge of the landscape at seminary, I build a stone wall next to a new pond.*

*The rocks were gathered and layed out for selection. Placement was determined by the shape of each rock and how it would fit into the unfolding pattern. Sometimes the rocks had to be chipped and altered to fit just right, but it was more desirable to use them as they were. The pattern of the interconnection was determined by the first rock.*

I had selected a nice big, round rock as the cornerstone... because it looked good. Yet, in hindsight, round and smooth does not make for a good starting point— because other rocks can't easily lock into it.

As the large front end loader was carrying the big rock to its resting place, the tractor tilted in a dip in the ground,... and the rock fell out... crashing to the ground...causing a couple chunks to break off the rock.

At first I was greatly dismayed and thought the rock was ruined, yet I soon realized that the broken rock would actually make a better cornerstone. The changes to the rock created places for other broken rocks to rest in / to be braced into. It was broken..... and better.

This is what is being said in First Peter and in Psalm 118: a rock that is broken and considered a rejection by superficial standards became the best cornerstone. Jesus is that broken rock that all other stones lean into and are build from that starting point.

All the believers / followers of Christ radiate from that broken foundation, and all form a new “holy nation” – God’s people ... a mighty and solid structure... interwoven to Christ.

All the pieces come together / interconnected to create one people / one new body.

The John passage is in the bulletin, but it was not read. In that text Jesus talked about the interconnection, and stressed that God was in him as he was in God. There was a unity / an indwelling... an interlocking relationship. Jesus went on and said that those who rest in God / a part of the interconnection... those who believe in Jesus / who radiate from that cornerstone are also a part of the whole, and thus contribute to the new creation beyond the cornerstone. The effect / result of the parts together will be even greater than the cornerstone.

We can easily imagine all the pieces / the living stones build from Christ forming into a mighty fortress like structure: a place of strength, comfort and safety. It would be a Christ centred God imbued creation. Each rock would be locked into the whole. It would be much like seeing a great pyramid, instead of a collection of independent rocks.

Maybe there is a connection with the Psalmist’s rock fortress. Maybe God’s fortress is just a bunch of broken and crushed rocks ..... that are placed together, radiating from unqualified love and united by the mortar of God’s Spirit.????

In addition, there is an important aspect that we must not ignore, and that is the brokenness.

In reality, all rocks are broken pieces from the earth.

In our area, the glaciers broke and transported the rocks we encounter, and all the rocks are broken pieces—some are big, and some are very small, and they all are different.

Separate and alone, they are pretty much worthless and in the way, ...yet when a master craftsperson carefully puts them together, a wonderful structure can be made.

And yes, they must be broken.

Jesus was broken..... broken for us. Jesus did not fit in a world of weathered round and smooth individual rocks, and we can not connect to God / to Christ... or each other,..... unless we are broken.

The ontological brokenness / the brokenness of being, of self is more than having a bad day. It is more than a depressing episode or a undesirable experience we endured.

Brokenness doesn't necessarily come from the blow of deep sorrow and loss, .... but it may.???

Brokenness means just that broken, and in keeping with the symbolism of rocks,... it means a chunk is missing.

Brokenness means we have changed. We are no longer what we were... before we were broken,..... and there is no going back.

Broken is being changed. Broken is being different than before.

We may have been fractured from a terrible blow like from a fall from a front end loader, or we may have been crushed by the long slow weight of a glacier, yet.. ...more often than not, .... we must offer ourselves to the master's chisel.

When we sense our separation from God / when come to realize that we are not interconnected to Christ—the way of love and redemption, then we may need to offer our entire being .... to be broken / to be changed / to become a new creation.

We call that process “repentance”, and it is Not done alone,....nor is the result of fear or anger.

Our offering to God must be in love: a gift of self to God / to love / a passion to be in the new creation with God and all other believers.

Broken,..... and maybe broken again....., and by the grace and wisdom of God we will fit together, all together with Christ,.....AND,....then,... when we are broken, mortared by God's spirit to Christ,  
THEN

We'll discover the fortress the Psalmist was seeking.