

Faith Is Action

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In This Issue:

**ARE YOU A BRICK
OR A STONE?**

PART II

Also:

**ARE YOU A WALL
OR A DOOR?**

ARE YOU A BRICK OR A STONE

PART TWO BY SHARON HARDY KNOTTS

The World's Mold

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And **be not conformed** to this world, but be ye **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (Rom. 12:1-2).

Beseech is the Greek word PARAKALEO. Perhaps it sounds familiar, like PARAKLATOS? The Holy Spirit is the PARAKLATOS (Jn. 14:15). The prefix PARA means *"along side,"* and CLETUS means *"to call"* therefore; *"to call along side."* The "Comforter", the Holy Spirit comes along side of us to comfort us, to support us, to help us pray, etc. It is the same word in this verse. The Holy Ghost on the inside is rising up strong, calling to us: **"Don't be conformed to this world!"**

He will shout it in your spirit whenever you begin to draw away and have more of an ear for the world; when you spend more time in front of the television, and more time on the computer and the worldly parts of it. The Holy Spirit on the inside of you will deal with you, saying, "Watch out! Be careful that you don't become conformed to this world!"

The word *conformed* means *"to put something in a mold."* That's how they make bricks. They use big rectangle molds, and they put the clay in them until they form to shape. Then they are put in the fire to harden.

The term "beseech" also has a military definition. It was used to give troops who were getting ready to go into battle their pep talk about the dangers they were about to face: *"Present your bodies a living sacrifice."* Saints, we are *living stones*. "Present" means you lay it down on the altar, to bring your body as a living sacrifice. It's antithetical to the "dead

sacrifices” of the cows and goats and sheep they brought into the House of God under the Old Covenant. Now God says: “I want **you**. I want **your body** a living sacrifice, holy, which is acceptable to Me.”

Missing Stones

Saints, if we will look in the Spirit, and look around in the House of God, we will see *missing stones*. People whom God raised up to be living stones in His House are missing. We know that if a structure is made of stones, and one stone falls out, the whole thing is not going to collapse. You can even be okay with a couple of missing stones, but when the number of missing stones increases, especially if they are in the same area, it is going to collapse.

Say there are many missing stones in the Sunday School department; the Sunday School is going to collapse. Perhaps many missing stones are in the choir, who are called to be “*living stones offering up holy sacrifices, songs, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody unto the Lord from their hearts.*” But at choir practice, when they try to learn a new song, they don’t have enough sopranos to hit the high notes, because there are too many missing stones. Or there aren’t enough men to hit the low notes. Wherever there are missing stones, things

are going to begin to fall apart and can eventually collapse.

So you not only have to be a *living stone*, you have to “*present*”; you have to **show up**. **You have to come and bring your sacrifice and take your place** in the temple of God, and **fill the place where your stone fits**. When everyone is in their place, then we have a temple of God: “*In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord. In whom you are also builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit*” (Eph. 2:21-22).

Count the Cost

Paul said that this is our *reasonable service*. What does “reasonable service” mean? That it’s only fair? It’s what we should do in light of what God has done for us? It’s only reasonable that we should do that for Him? Sometimes we think that way. I’m not saying that’s a wrong way of thinking, but it’s not what it means. It means “*with intelligent consecration.*” In other words, you, of your own volition, with understanding, make an intelligent consecration to God. You say, “God, I’m a living stone. Here I am. I surrender all to You. I am devoted to Your service. Where do I fit in Your temple? I realize I have to count the cost, and I am willing.”

Jesus taught that if a man

intends to build a tower, and he doesn't sit down first and *count the cost*—figure what supplies he needs and how much it's going to cost, he might get part way through, run out of money, and not be able to finish. He said, "Before you start, *count the cost*" (Ref. Luke 14:28-30).

God is saying, "What is your reasonable service? Consider, and with an intelligent consecration, say, 'Lord, Here am I: If I say that I'm going to be on the choir, I'm going to be on the choir, including rehearsals and services. If I say that I'm going to help in the Sunday School department, I'm going to do it. If I say that I'm going on street meetings, I'm going to show up. Whatever it is: going to the jail, to the rehab centers to minister, to serve anywhere in the Body of Christ, even if it is faithfully sitting in the pews and paying my tithes to support the Gospel, I'm going to be a *living stone* and a *present stone*.'" Remember back in elementary school when the teacher called your name, you'd say, "*Present!*" Well, God's calling your name, and He wants to hear you say, "*Present! Here am I, Lord, I'm ready to serve!*"

What Are You Building?

Think about it: If you are building for the temporary pleasures of this world and worldly gain, **use bricks**. If you are building for worldly acceptance, fame

and success, **use bricks**. If these are your goals for your life, **use bricks**. But if you are building for eternal treasures, **you must use stones**—which have been wrought by the hand of God and not the hand of man. *If you're building a holy habitation unto Him, you have to use holy stones.*

"Don't be conformed to this world." We said that this means "to form or mold something according to a pattern." The Greek word is a mouthful, SUSCHEMATIZO, but I tell you, because you will recognize its English counterpart. Most of us know what a "schematic" is, especially when we buy something that we have to put together. You know, when we get that bright idea to buy your child that certain toy, or when a husband decides to buy that swing for his wife and put it together on the porch. He empties out the box and there are 50 thousand pieces: Screws and nuts, and who knows what, and they are all over the place! They come with this piece of paper that says, "Figure 125, Figure 299," and there are arrows pointing to some little screws that you are supposed to put in, but the holes don't line up. That's a *schematic*, and it gets real hairy when you get into electronics. This is the very idea being used here: *Don't let the devil put you together according to the world's schematics.*

Peter said: "*As obedient chil-*

dren, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance..." (When you didn't know any better, you fashioned yourself according to the world.) "...but as he which has called you is holy, then be ye holy in all manner of conversation (lifestyle)" (1 Peter 1:14-15). The term *fashioning* here is the same Greek word rendered *conformed* in Romans 12:2, referring to schematics. Don't fashion yourselves like the world's bricks, *but be transformed*.

This word *transformed* is also very important in Greek: METAMORPHOSIS. We all learned this in science class when we learned about the caterpillar turning into a butterfly. It is a compound word: META: *after*, and MORPH: *form*: *After-form* meaning that it changed from one form to another. It most always takes place from the inside out. Therefore, in the innermost part of our nature, God said, "Be transformed." How does this happen? "*By the renewing of your mind...*" The present tense means continual action—*by the renewing and renewing, etc.*

Put Off—Put On

"That you put off concerning the former conversation (lifestyle) the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new man, which after God is cre-

ated in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24). There is a "bridge," you will notice, between putting off the old and putting on the new: *Being renewed in the spirit of your mind!* You cannot put on the new man until you have put off the old man, and this necessitates daily renewing the mind by the Word of God. C.S. Lewis said, "*The difference between worldliness and godliness is a renewed mind.*"

Sometimes Christians say, "I'm going to stop being so worldly." That doesn't work. Instead of saying, "I'm not going to be so worldly" say, "*I'm going to be more godly. I'm going to be more spiritual. I'm going to hunger and thirst after righteousness. I'm going to get into God's Word. I'm going to meditate on Scriptures.*" You can try not to be worldly, but being renewed in the spirit of your mind daily is the only way to prevent yourself from becoming a worldly brick.

In my personal life, when I see that I'm being distracted by the things of the world, I know I have to get renewed in the spirit of my mind. I always read my Bible every day, but then I need to really meditate on Scripture. Even though I already know them, and can tell you what they mean, still I have to keep my mind renewed, because I want to be a holy stone in the House of God.

We Are the Temple of God

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?...And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and will walk in them; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

God is saying, “I’m only going to dwell in you if you are a holy living stone.” We saw that God would have nothing to do with an altar of brick. God said that sacrifices offered on an altar of brick were a stench in His nose. If we want to be the temple of the living God, we have to come out from amongst the infidels, and the darkness, and the idol worshippers of this world.

Pebble Beach

Let me tell you something about stones and how they are created. Pebble Beach, California is a beautiful place where tourists come from all over, because strewn on the sands of Pebble Beach are beautiful, exquisite stones that are all smooth, polished, and round. Nature did this.

It’s because of the surf of the ocean: The thundering, the roaring, the beating, the slapping of the surf relentlessly night and day against the jagged cliffs along the shore, create pebbles from pieces that break off. There is no mercy when that surf comes in and picks those stones up and throws them up in the air, and they fall down and crash against one another. They grind against one another, and this goes on and on, but the result is beautiful, round, polished stones that people come from all around to gather. It’s the friction, the grinding and the beating, the exposure to the winds and the waves and the elements that cause those stones to be so beautiful.

You can go up the coast a little way, and there is a peaceful quiet cove that is protected from the surf and from storms, and the sun is always shining on it. Its sands are also strewn with stones and pebbles, but nobody wants them, and nobody goes there to collect them, because they are jagged and rough and devoid of all beauty. You see, they were in a peaceful, quiet place, but it is the friction, the winds, the storms, and the things that come against us in life that make us into polished stones. If you want something polished, you have to add pressure to it. God wants to make us His living stones, so in life, we are going to have pressures.

Jesus said, *“If the world hated*

Me, it's going to hate you. If you are of this world, the world would love its own, but since you are not of the world, the world is going to hate you. (Ref. Jn. 15:18-19). I have chosen you out of the world, because I don't want you to be a worldly brick. I want you to be a living stone. I want to beautify you with My salvation" (Ps. 149:4).

Saints, the storms and the winds and harsh things that come in your life serve a purpose, because you are a living stone in the temple of God. God's house is beautiful, and God's stones are beautiful, and the things that come against us in life are to polish us and beautify us. Get ready, there are going to be more persecutions. Jesus said that men are going to *hate us and revile us, and persecute us for His sake*. The nearer we get to the coming of the Lord, the worse it is going to be, but Jesus said, *"Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven"* (Mt. 5:11-12). God is making you and me living stones, but sometimes we are going to have to sit still under the pressure. When things come against us, we need to see the bigger picture, and know that God is making something beautiful out of us.

Upon This Rock

Jesus was with the disciples at Caesarea, and He said, *"I want to*

ask you something: Whom do all the people say I am?" They said, *"Some say that you are Elijah, some say that you are Jeremiah, some say that you are that prophet"* (that Moses said would come). Then Jesus said, *"But whom do you say that I am?"* Peter answered, *"Thou art the Christ! Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God."* Jesus said, *"Flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you, but My Father in Heaven. And I also say unto you..."* (This word *also* is important, because Jesus was putting Himself on a parallel with God, making himself equal with His Father in Heaven.)

"You are Peter." He probably said, *"You are Cephas,"* because Jesus spoke Aramaic, and it means *"a stone."* The Greek word is PETROS, which is a masculine noun and means *"a stone, a chip off of a big rock."* Jesus said, *"Peter, you are a stone."* He could have turned to each of them and said, *"So are you, Matthew, so are you, James and John. You are all stones."*

"And upon this rock, I will build my Church." "Rock" is PETRA, which is a feminine noun and means *"a huge mountain-side."* "Church,"—ECCLESIA is another feminine noun. *"I shall build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."* (Ref. Matt. 16:13-19).

Jesus didn't say that *upon*

Peter He would build His Church. Peter is not big enough. You can't build a church on one stone. He said, "*Upon this rock—upon this confession—upon this foundational truth: I am the Christ, the Son of God, I will build My Church. And against this Church of living stones, the gates of Hell will not prevail!*"

Will it come against it? Absolutely! We will be in a continual battle against the rulers of the darkness of this world (Eph. 6:12). But it cannot overtake us, and if you are a living stone in the temple of God, and not a missing stone, it will not overtake you! You are not standing all by yourself. You are standing together

with other living stones on the sure foundation, that no other foundation can be laid, than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus (Ref. 1 Cor. 3:11).

"Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And let everyone that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19). He knows who are **worldly bricks** and who are **holy stones**.

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ARE YOU A WALL OR A DOOR?



BY SHARON HARDY KNOTTS

In the beautiful poetry of the Song of Solomon is written one of the most touching and descriptive love stories of all time. The lovely Shulamite maiden was wooed and royally pursued by none other than the greatly rich and wise King of Israel, Solomon himself, who had all that his heart could desire. He declared of himself:

“So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired. I

kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor” (Ecc.2:9-10).

He had gold laid up as dust. He had over \$40 million in gold alone, not counting his throne and other vessels of gold. Besides, he had vast wealth of silver, precious stones, ivory, lands, cattle, sheep, and on and on. His fame and glory were so vast that 1Kings 10 records that the Queen of Sheba (modern Ethiopia) came to Jerusalem with a very great train to see and hear of Solomon’s great wealth and wisdom for herself. She also brought him gifts of camels bearing spices, gifts of gold and precious stones, and of rare and precious almug trees whose wood was used to make musical instruments.

When she saw all the glory and splendor of Solomon’s kingdom, she was in awe. When she heard his great wisdom and observed that all of his servants were happy, she declared:

“It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceeded the same which I heard” (1Kings 10:6-7).

The Bible writer recorded: *“So King Solomon exceeded all*

the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart" (1Kings 10:23-24).

In addition to all of his incalculable wealth, Solomon had a total of 1,000 wives and concubines! Yet with all of this, he set his heart on having the Shulamite maiden too! He promised to make her "*his Queen of Queens*" if she would just be his.

The Country Girl

She was just a little farm girl in the country who lived with her mother and brothers. Apparently, her father was not in the picture, so they dearly loved her and protected her and nurtured her as she grew into a beautiful young maiden. She worked in the fields watching over and caring for the family's vineyards. One day while she was out in the fields, a great caravan of camels came passing by. It was the procession of none other than Solomon the great King who was visiting the northern part of his kingdom. It was a chance meeting as she was tending the vineyard at that moment, and when he saw the beauty of the fair Shulamite with her smooth sun-tanned skin and raven black hair that fell in ringlets around her face, framing her shimmering dark eyes and perfect white teeth, he desired to have her for his own. And being the King, he took her

away, far away from the rolling fields of green grass and wildflowers, far away from the golden meadows of fruit trees and fig trees and the aromatic vineyards that she called home; far away from the picturesque hillsides and mountains where village shepherds herded their flocks — and far away from the tender voice of her beloved shepherd with whom she had exchanged vows of love and betrothal as they stood together under the apple tree that grew by her birthplace and childhood home. Far away to Jerusalem, the Golden City, and all of the splendor of the palace and the glories of the kingdom that had caused the Queen of Sheba to stand in awe — she who was accustomed to royal splendor!

"I Am My Beloved's"

But all of this could not for one moment satisfy the longing in her heart to be back home with her shepherd boy of whom she said: "*I have found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go...*" (SS.3:4). Nothing Solomon could do or promise could dissuade her from wanting to return to her home and her sweetheart. He bedecked her with gold and fine jewels and royal garments. He instructed the ladies of the royal court to make her happy and to convince her of his love for her and of his charm and his intentions to make her his

Queen of Queens. But all she did was tell the ladies of the court about her beloved shepherd boy. She went on and on about his handsome beauty and his pleasant ways, about his strength, his tenderness, his doe-like eyes and beautiful hair: *“My beloved is the fairest among ten thousand”* (5:10).

She told them how she had dreamt of him during their separation in her stay at the Palace, how she heard his voice in her sleep and his knock at her door, but when she went to answer it, he was gone. She called out to him, but there was no answer as she ran out into the night and into the city streets to find him. She beseeched them as they listened to her words of love and yearning for her beloved: *“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, tell him that I am sick of love (love sick)!”* Have you ever been lovesick—so in love you couldn’t bear being away from the one you were in love with? Sometimes you couldn’t eat or sleep.

When they heard these words of unshakable love and faithfulness to her beloved shepherd, they asked: *“What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O fairest among women?”* In other words: *“What is so special about this man that makes you pine so for him (when Solomon the king wants to make you his queen!)”*

(5:8-9).

She described his handsome looks and perfect physique. And she said: *“His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem”* (v.16).

The Rendezvous

During her stay at the palace, her beloved shepherd, who had followed Solomon’s procession back to Jerusalem, came to see her. He told her of his longing for her and how much he still loved her. When she heard his words of love, she vowed to him that she would be faithful to his love and she would return to him: *“Until the daybreak and the shadows flee, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh and of the hill of frankincense.”* He responded: *“Thou art fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.”* His meaning: *“You are truly pure and faithful.”* (4:6-7).

Meanwhile Solomon’s flattery of her intensified and became more enticing, and the ladies of the court were pressing her, trying to stir up feelings in her for Solomon. But she would not succumb to Solomon’s flattery and charm; nor was her head turned by all of the wealth and extravagance he showered upon her. Her heart and pledge of love belonged to another, and she would not betray him for all the splendor and majesty that could be hers if she sold her

love to Solomon's seduction. Finally, when Solomon realized that nothing was going to change her mind, or rather, her heart, he relented and allowed her to return home to her beloved shepherd.

The Reunion

When they had almost reached her family home, they came to the place where she and her shepherd boy had first exchanged their vows to each other. Her beloved shepherd was waiting. There under the same apple tree they renewed them, and this record is some of the most timeless words of love ever written, still used in many modern marriage ceremonies:

"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy as cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned" (8:6-7).

As they drew closer to her house, her brothers beheld her coming from afar, and they questioned amongst themselves what they should do concerning her experience with King Solomon. Had she kept her virtue? If so, they would give her their blessing and her hand in marriage to her

beloved. But if she had not, then according to law, they would have to punish her, which under the law could even mean the death penalty. And so they referred back to what they had decided long before:

"We have a little sister, and she has no breasts: What shall we do for her in the day when she shall be spoken for?" (This refers to the time before she became a woman. The brothers had agreed to do everything they could to keep her virtuous until the time that she was old enough to marry, so that she would be worthy to be spoken for to be the wife of the man who desired her.)

"If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar" (8:8-9). The brothers' thoughts:

*"If she had been **a wall** — has kept her virginity — has maintained her purity and faithfulness, if she has not opened herself up to others to lose her virtue, even in the face of enticing allurements and temptations, they would reward her greatly and would protect her until the day she would be married."*

*"But if she is **a door** and had opened herself up to temptation, and not maintained her virtue, and had lost her purity, they would enclose her with boards of cedar. They would shut her up to live an isolated, joyless life."*

So they asked their sweet little sister whom they had loved and protected until the day Solomon took her away: “*Are you a wall – or are you a door?*” And she answered them passionately like only a teenage girl can:

“I am a wall!” (I did not succumb to the King’s desires!) *“Therefore, I have found favor in the eyes of my beloved. Solomon has many gardens and vineyards to eat and drink from. My vineyard, which is mine, is before me”* (vv.10-12). Then the Shulamite called out to her beloved shepherd: *“Cause me to hear thy voice. Make haste, my beloved, and be like a young hart upon the mountains of spices”* (vv.13-14).

May the Holy Spirit speak to our hearts today through both this soul-searching message and **“Are You A Brick or A Stone?”** He is asking us if we are compromisers, sell-outs to worldliness, *“lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof”* (2Tim.3:5). Are we committing spiritual adultery by becoming friends of this world? (James 4:4). Do we spend time pursuing the pleasures of the flesh rather than the pleasures of His Presence? Ask yourself: Am I a **wall** or a **door**?

He is calling to us today: *“I am the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys.... Arise, my love, and come away...”*

(SS.2:1,13).

May our hearts passionately reply, *“Draw me, and I will run after Thee!”* (SS.1:4).