

# Precious Stability

I Peter 2:4-8

## Introduction

This morning, we continue our series in I Peter that we are calling: *Standing Firm in Grace*.

I asked you in the opening message a couple of months ago, “*How are we to stand firm in such an unstable world where we just don’t fit in?*”

- Peter’s original audience in Asia Minor was asking the same kind of question.
- As persecution for their faith was on the rise, Peter wrote and exhorted them to stand firm in the in the true grace of God.

In our last few sermons, he has turned our attention to the importance of the community of faith, that is the church, in our standing firm in the true grace of God.

- Because of the gracious work of God in Christ we must love one another deeply from a pure heart and long for the pure spiritual milk like infants so that we might continue to grow in Christ.

This week and next, Lord willing, we will continue to study how the church is necessary for the stability and flourishing of our faith.

“Show me your closets friends and I’ll tell you your future.”

You are as stable as your squad and your squad is as stable as the foundation upon which their collective life is built upon.

Christ is either the Solid Rock on which you (we) Stand or the Stumbling Stone Over which you (we) fall.

This morning is an invitation to be comforted by and rest in the Precious Stability found only in Christ.

## I. On Christ the Solid Rock We Stand. (2:4-6)

*<sup>4</sup> As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,*

- Let me remind you that in 2:1-3 Peter clearly had Psalm 34 in mind which is a Psalm David wrote in celebratory worship for God's faithfulness to deliver him from Absalom.
- This is the One whom last week he told us to crave because we've tasted and seen that He is good.
- Also:

*As you come to him.* As you draw near continually.

- Remember you have not only tasted and seen that he is good, but you've sought Him and saved by Him in your time of need.

**Psalm 34:4-5.**

*<sup>4</sup> I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. <sup>5</sup> Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.*

- Peter is unashamedly saying that, Yahweh, The LORD, in Psalm 34 is Jesus the Christ.
- And he is not unaware of how controversial this claim is.
- In fact, he sets up the great contrast of our passage by highlighting that Christ was a *living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chose and precious.*

## Christ is The Living Stone

- Christ must be rejected or accepted.
- You cannot consider the claims of the Christ of Scripture and remain neutral.
- You must accept Him as the Foundation of your Life now and eternally or you must reject Him as foundation and build your life on something else.
- To remain "neutral" or "undecided" is to choose to build on something else.
- *Non-Christian friends that are here: This is not to rush you per se, nor twist your arm.*
- *We have no desire to manipulate you into faith in Christ.*
- *We love you and are glad you are here and want you to genuinely consider Christ and consider us as your servants in that journey.*
- But we really do believe ours, yours, and every other human beings' **eternal destiny** and **current joy** is **tied to the Christ of Scripture.**

- Peter couldn't make this clearer in our text today with the stark contrasts of chosen and rejected, honor and shame, and belief and unbelief.

*Jesus is a living stone rejected by men.*

- Peter knows first-hand of the rejection of Christ by men.
- He experienced the first Palm Sunday and Easter week.
- He had the last Supper.
- He witnessed Jesus praying in Gethsemane with great drops of blood while he napped.
- He saw Judas' betrayal.
- He himself denied knowing Jesus 3 times in the midst of it all.
- He saw the bruised, bloodied, and beaten Lord.
- He saw Christ hanging on that bloody tree and breathe his last.
- Christ was placed in the tomb and the stone rolled in front of it.
- The religious leaders rejected Jesus by killing him on that cross but notice that Peter calls Jesus a 'living stone'.
- He is a Living Stone because the Tomb Stone rolled away!
- **God made him the foundation of the church by raising him from the dead.**

*in the sight of God chosen and precious.*

- Through the world's view: rejected.
- Through God's view: Jesus is chosen and precious.
- Let us be reminded to look at Jesus through the spectacles of God not the spectacles of this world. *a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious.*

*And let us remember our privilege relation to Him!*

## We are Living Stones

*<sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

- We ourselves are like living stones built upon the Cornerstone into a holy priesthood for worship.
- We come to him who is living and because of Him, we are living!
- He resurrected from the Dead and through faith He has given us new life and we too will be resurrected on the last day.
- This is what we will celebrate at a Baptism/Communion service on Sunday, April the 7<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.

#### **Romans 6:4-5**

*<sup>4</sup>We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.*

- We are now like living stones being built up into a spiritual house where the Most High God of glory dwells!
- He is the Cornerstone, the Foundation, that all of those who look to him by faith find our place in the structure God is building.
- He doesn't dwell in temples made by man!
- He no longer dwells in brick and mortar, but in his blood bought people from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

#### **Acts 7:48-50**

*<sup>48</sup>Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says,  
<sup>49</sup>“Heaven is my throne,  
and the earth is my footstool.  
What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord,  
or what is the place of my rest?  
<sup>50</sup>Did not my hand make all these things?’*

#### **Acts 17:24-25**

*<sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, <sup>25</sup>nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*

- He is building a living growing temple in His people, where His presence dwells.
- We are the temple of God. We are the household of God.

- Where are where His presence dwells in this world.
- Listen to what Paul said to both Jews and Gentiles reconciled to God and to one another through the King's Cross:

**Ephesians 2:19-22**

*<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.<sup>1</sup>*

- Let me stop here and pastorally point out that isolated Christianity, solo Christianity, me and Jesus Christianity, individualistic Christianity, is not biblical Christianity.
- Illustrate: The Darst family lives in a brick ranch house. If I took a single brick out of the house that needed repair, and accidentally left it here at the church.
- No one would find it and say, "*This is where the Darst family resides.*" "*This is the Clint and Rachel's House*".
- A brick ain't a house by itself. It is a part of the house.
- It is a house when joined with other bricks to make a dwelling place.
- This is not to say that you are not individually indwelt by the Holy Spirit and individually loved by God. If you are in Christ, you certainly are.

**1 Co. 6:19**

*<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

- But the Church is the house/household he is building.
- Christ did not say, "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Christians. He said I will build my church."
- The church is the household of God.<sup>2</sup> We are stones in his temple.

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<sup>1</sup> See also: 1 Cor 3:16; Heb. 3:6

<sup>2</sup> "The term "house" (*oikos*) alludes to the temple, which is commonly called a "house" in the Old Testament (e.g., 2 Sam 7:13; 1 Kgs 3:2; 6; 8, etc.) and is also designated as a house in the New Testament (Matt 21:13; 23:38; John 2:16-17; Acts 7:47, 49)." Schreiner, Thomas R. 2003. [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#). Vol. 37. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers..

- We are members in His household; that's why Paul wrote to I Timothy saying:  
**I Tim. 3:15**  
***<sup>15</sup> if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.***
- That is why we refer to our Church as our Faith Family and refer to our "Members Meetings" as "Faith Family Meetings".
- You belong in the house God is building!
  - You need the whole family.
  - Brothers and sisters. Mothers and Fathers. Nieces and nephews.
  - The vibrancy of children.
  - The testimony of our high school students.
  - CO and new conversions spur on the older saints and give them the joy to finish their race sprinting in service to Christ rather than retiring in service to themselves.
- If you don't have a faith family. Consider joining ours! Connect Class: Friday April 26<sup>th</sup> and Saturday morning the 27<sup>th</sup>.
- Connect with saints of old by taking up and reading good theological works!

But notice that we are not only a "Spiritual house" but we make "spiritual sacrifices" as a holy priesthood.

- "Spiritual sacrifices"
- We are the people of God where His Holy Spirit is at work:
  - transforming,
  - convicting,
  - renewing,
  - conforming us to Christ,
  - helping us to help one another safely home,
  - by speaking the truth to one another in love,
  - carrying one another's burdens,
  - rebuking, exhorting, encouraging one another with the Word,
  - spurring one another on to good deeds...etc.<sup>3</sup>
- And as a priesthood of believers we make these sacrifices through our worship and our witness (2:9) as we will see next week.
- These sacrifices are pleasing to God.

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<sup>3</sup> Schreiner, Thomas R. 2003. [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#). Vol. 37. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers. "Spiritual sacrifices" (*pneumatikas thysias*) are required, meaning that they are sacrifices offered by virtue of the work of the Holy Spirit.

- The sacrifices themselves please him because they have been made acceptable through Jesus! (Worship)
  - We delight in God in genuine worship.
  - We disciple one another in this new covenant community.
  - We declare the good news of the gospel to outsiders and invite them in.
  - We display good deeds of mercy and justice to commend our good news.
- And all of this is pleasing to God because of Christ's finished work on our behalf!

### **Hebrews 13:15-16**

*<sup>15</sup> Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. <sup>16</sup> Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*

### **We will not be put to Shame. (Is. 28:16)**

*<sup>6</sup> For it stands in Scripture:  
 "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
 a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
 and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."*

- Peter encourages believers to know that Jesus is the precious cornerstone prophesied in Isaiah 28:16.
- We might get made fun of, mocked, or even persecuted in this life, but on that final day, the day that matters more than all other days put together, **we will not be but to shame.**
- As we increasingly find ourselves marginalized in society because of our faith in Christ we must increasingly identify ourselves with the society of Christ.
- We might lose more and more status and significance in this culture and this world no matter what culture we live in or are a part of, but we are a part of a people, a culture, a society that will never die.
- In the end the people of Christ are the people that will reign and rule with Him forever. We will not be put to shame then, no matter what they do to us now.
- We are the *weak made strong*!
- We will have no regrets for trusting in Christ and building our life on him as individuals but also as a body of believers.

- In fact, we will be honored (7a) on that great day and therefore carry with us honor on this day – even if only through God’s spectacles and those who look through the same.
- Our faith and union to Christ will be honored with Christ on that great day.
- We will be vindicated.

He is the precious cornerstone that we are being built on and we will not be put to shame.

On Christ the Solid Rock We Stand.

## **II. All other Ground is Sinking Sand (2:7-8)**

- Remember in verse 4 Peter set up the stark contrast referring to Christ as *a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious.*
- Just as he has tied the destiny of those who trust in Christ to Christ as the Cornerstone so now he ties the destiny of those who reject Christ to their stumbling over and refusal to obey Him as Cornerstone.
- And just as he grounded the positive response in the prophecy of Is. 28, so now he grounds the negative response to Christ as fulfillment of Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14.

Instead of standing on Christ the solid rock, some will reject, stumble over, and be offended by Him to their own destruction. (Ps. 118:22; Is. 8:14).

### **I Peter 2:7-8**

*<sup>7</sup>So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,*

*“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”*

*<sup>8</sup>and*

*“A stone of stumbling,  
and a rock of offense.”*

*They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*

- Stumble: Doesn’t mean accidentally tripping over it.
- It means getting mentally, morally, spiritually, tripped up over Christ as the Foundation of Faith such that they disobey the gospel message/word. [The way we](#)



might when negotiating a deal say, no I'm just getting tripped up over this part of the deal.

- It is a rejection of Christ as the Cornerstone of faith.
- It is a rebellion against the gospel message that Christ came to save sinners and must be the foundation of our faith.
- It is a refusal to embrace Jesus Christ as Lord of all.
- Those who disbelieve are tripped up over Christ as cornerstone.
- They refuse to trust and obey Him and build their life and faith on Christ as a foundation along with all of his blood bought people.
- They are morally responsible for their sin of disobedience.

In context Peter is highlighting the Jewish leaders' rejection of Jesus.

- Jesus was rejected by his own (John 1) and specifically by the religious leaders because he wasn't what they anticipated.
- He kicked off Holy Week by humbly riding in on a donkey.
- The religious leaders wanted Messiah to overthrow Rome and bring geopolitical power back to Israel. They want Him riding in on a war horse.
- Worldly religious instincts want the same power, influence, and control that non-religious leaders want.
- After riding in humbly to Jerusalem for Passover week, later Jesus pronounced a series of scathing woes or condemnations on the religious leaders.
- In the midst of these woes, Jesus warned his disciples against this mindset as he pronounced saying:

**Mt. 23:11-12**

***<sup>11</sup> The greatest among you shall be your servant. <sup>12</sup> Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.***

- Jesus wasn't about that life domineering-power-hungry-arrogant-self-righteous life.
  - He called ordinary disciples who knew they were sick with sin.
  - He called weak, messed up sinners who were willing to be honest about their sin.
  - Even loud-foot-in-mouth fishermen like Peter.

- He didn't need influencers.
- He didn't need impressive people.
- He came to call those who are aware of their need.
- The religious leaders ironically thought they were building something for God, but it was steeped in hypocritical self-love and self-glory.
- Jesus concluded the woes he pronounced against these wicked religious leaders by lamenting over Jerusalem and the destruction to come and pay careful attention to his language:

**Mt. 23:37-24:2**

*<sup>37</sup> "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! <sup>38</sup> See, your house is left to you desolate. <sup>39</sup> For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' "*

*<sup>1</sup> Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. <sup>2</sup> But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, **there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.**"*

- You build your life on Christ the Cornerstone or you build it on self-determined religion and it will be torn down in the end just like the temple was in AD 70.
- Peter used this same illustration in his sermon in Acts 4 and you can see why the religious leaders found it offensive.

**Acts 4:11-12**

*<sup>11</sup> This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, **the builders**, which has become the cornerstone. <sup>12</sup> And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

- Peter had heard the Lord Jesus quote from these texts and apply the stone imagery to himself in his parables on talents and wicked tenants (Mark 12:10–11; Matt. 21:42–44; Luke 20:17–18).
- Paul talked about Israel stumbling over the stone in Ro. 9:32-33.
- Because this is the natural state of religion in the fallen human heart.
- We try to build our own way to God. **False Religion Disobeys the Word to its own Destruction.**

- God has made clear that He will reject every single man-made attempt to get right with God.
- For sinful man to get right with God our merciful God has to make us right with Himself.
- The offended King and Judge determines how the offense is reconciled.
- And He loved sin sick people like us enough to send His only Son to die to pay our penalty and to rise to give us His prize!
- The message of the Cross was offensive to the religious leaders of Jesus' day, it was offensive to the polytheistic society in Asia Minor where Peter was writing, and it is offensive to our pluralistic society of today.
- It might even feel a little bit offensive to you because the pluralistic culture has shaped your mind and heart more than you might realize.
- But brothers and sisters, the exclusivity of Christ is something we must be willing to live and die for. For <sup>12</sup>*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*"
- We need a revival of this early church energy because you know what verse 13 says, <sup>13</sup>*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.*"
- But as followers of Christ, we fight not with weapons to cause harm to the flesh, but with weapons of love to restore people to God and to one another through the King's Cross – even if that means destroying bad ideas and arguments:

### 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

<sup>3</sup>*For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup>For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. <sup>5</sup>We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,*

- May the Lord give us Bold humility! May we be humble beasts!
- Bold in our commitment to love one another and this lost and dying world with a bold commitment to the truth.

- And bold transparency and honesty about our own need for God's, grace, mercy, and faithfulness to us in Christ.
- The Cross must be Central in our life individually and as a church.
- What we win people with is what we win them to!
- **Let us win them to that which can keep and sustain them in stable and safe joy forever!**
- **And let us not be surprised or dismayed when our friends or family reject Christ.**
- In fact, the Spirit has given us this word so that we understand even these rejections are under the sovereign umbrella of God's plans. Therefore, we are not surprised when this happens.
- *Disappointed. Saddened. Concerned.*
- But **not surprised or shaken in our confidence.**
- We are the aroma of death to those who are perishing and the aroma of life to those who are being saved (2 Corinthians 2:15-17).

*They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*

- We can rest knowing that God is sovereign even over the rejection of His son.
- God wasn't out of control when Israel rejected the Light of the World.

#### **J.I. Packer**

It is an apparent incompatibility between two apparent truths. An antinomy exists when a pair of principles stand side by side, seemingly irreconcilable, yet both undeniable. There are cogent reasons for believing each of them; each rests on clear and solid evidence; but it is a mystery to you how they can be squared with each other. You see that each must be true on its own, but you do not see how they can both be true together.<sup>4</sup>...God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are taught to us side by side in the same Bible; sometimes, indeed, in the same text.<sup>□</sup> Both are thus guaranteed to us by the same divine authority; both, therefore, are true. It follows that they must be held together, and not played off against each other. Man is a responsible moral agent, though he is also divinely controlled; man is divinely controlled, though he is also a responsible moral agent. God's sovereignty is a

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<sup>4</sup> Packer, J. I. 2012. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Westmont, IL: IVP Books.

reality, and man's responsibility is a reality too. This is the revealed antinomy in terms of which we have to do our thinking about evangelism.<sup>5</sup>

- God's hands are not tied behind his back wishing he could do something.
- And he is not some evil god entertaining himself with humans like a puppet master with puppets on a string.
- God is sovereign.
- Man is responsible.
- God is King and Judge.
- Man must bow the knee and give an account.
- You must believe in Christ, or you will be ashamed forever.
- If you believe in Christ, you will be honored forever.
- This emphasis in this context as with almost all **emphasis on election and God's sovereignty in Scripture is meant to comfort the believer.**
- It is **not meant to lead to speculation about who is the elect.**
- It is **not meant to lead to arrogance in theological arguments.**
- It is meant to **lead to a humble faith and rest and encouragement when we don't understand how it all works out.**

**Spurgeon:**

*"The sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which the child of God rests his head at night, giving perfect peace."*

- Until that great day on Christ the Solid Rock we stand, knowing and believing, that on that great day, we will also understand.

## **Conclusion**

### **Mt. 7:24-27**

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<sup>5</sup> Packer, J. I. 2012. [\*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God\*](#). Westmont, IL: IVP Books.

*<sup>24</sup> “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. <sup>26</sup> And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. <sup>27</sup> And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”*

- Christ is the precious cornerstone that we are being built on and we will not be put to shame.
- We are like living stones that He is building into a glorious temple that we might live lives of worship and witness until his great grace.
- He is a solid rock that his church will be built upon and honored throughout eternity.
- Our destiny is completely tied up to Christs, and beloved on this Palm Sunday, let me remind you that **His Tomb is empty and His Throne is not.**
- **Brothers and sisters, do you see the glorious privilege it is to be a member of Christ’s church?**
  - He is building a dwelling place for Himself in this world.
  - He has made you a stone in His glorious temple.
  - He has built it all on Christ the Cornerstone, the Solid Rock, that we can rest ourselves on.
  - He has married his glory to the good of His covenant people.
  - He will build His house.
  - Satan, this broken world, those who persecute us, even our own sin, cannot stop Him.
- **The glories of being a part of His genuine covenant people is going to increasingly become obvious. You belong. You matter. You are beloved of God and His people.**
- This morning is an invitation to be comforted by and rest in the Precious Stability found only in Christ.

*When He shall come with trumpet sound  
Oh may [We] then in Him be found*

*Dressed in his righteousness alone  
Faultless to stand before the throne*

Precious Stability. Rest.