

Unlocking Freedom: “1 Peter: Hope in a Foreign Land”

Sermon preached by Chris Lofquist

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Introduction

As you open your Bibles to **1 Peter chapter 2**, I would like to remind you where we left off last week. Last week we saw Peter encourage the exiled and suffering believers of Asia Minor to build their lives upon the living stone of Jesus Christ, by keeping their relationship with Him central in everything. **Verse 4** Peter speaks of Jesus as the living stone, rejected by men yet precious in the sight of God.

Verse 5 he tells us that we are also living stones, being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus. This imagery was beautiful, as we looked at God being the builder, and us being joined together with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone. The picture Peter gives us highlighted the access we have as priests to God Almighty, we are holy priests being built upon Christ. The writer of Hebrews says that because of this relationship with Christ, we can “approach the throne of grace with boldness!” (**Heb. 4:16**) What a privilege we have as living stones being built upon the Chief cornerstone. Today we will finish out that thought looking at more privileges we have in Christ as we build our lives upon Him as the Chief Cornerstone.

Please open your Bibles to **1 Peter chapter 2 verse 6**.

Read **1 Peter 2:6-10**. *Open in Prayer.*

John MacArthur tells of a university student who thought himself to be quite the scholar. He said to a pastor on one occasion, ‘I have decided that I do not believe in God.’ Which lead the pastor to ask him why he no longer believed in God’s existence. And the student proceeded to sketch a rather strange and twisted caricature of an unfair God, who did not have a kind and good bone in His body. The pastor turned to this student and said, ‘Well, we’re in the same boat. I don’t believe in that God either.’

This story raises the question, **who is the God that you believe in?** In this passage we see a picture of God who has chosen some to be blessed and others to be doomed. This can bring about some confusion on who God is, warping our view of God. There are many people, even believers, who see God as less than kind, and not very good at all. They draw this conclusion from wrestling with passages like this one, and looking around at the world’s devastating condition. They hear that God has chosen some to doom. They see disease, difficulty, and destruction and conclude that God must not exist, and if He did, He is not good. However, anyone who *has tasted of the kindness of the Lord*; anyone who looks at the world through born again eyes can recognize that God is good, He is kind, He is gracious and merciful. **Psalm 52:1** says, “*the loving kindness of God, endures all day!*” This is the God that we worship, One who’s loving kindness endures all day and forevermore. And when you have tasted of His kindness, when you have placed your faith and trust in Jesus as your Savior, you have come to understand His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness, and His love - The word God becomes synonymous with Good. **For God at His core is Good.** And we see His goodness shine forth in this

text as we look at the blessings He bestows upon those who place their faith and build their lives upon Jesus Christ, the Chief Cornerstone. This is what the suffering saints Peter is writing to, need to hear.

That when Christ is central in your life – when you have given up all for Him - He will not disappoint you, but rather you will experience stability and salvation which brings with it a new identity. These are the blessings that fall upon those who believe in Christ and build their lives upon Him as their chief cornerstone. So, let's work our way through these amazing blessings flowing from the hand of our Good God, found in these 5 verses.

1. We will not be disappointed in Christ our Cornerstone. (v. 6)

“For this is contained in Scripture: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.’”

Peter begins this verse by reminding us that God's plan of redemption and the building of the Church was foretold about in the Old Testament - That is why he begins with the phrase – *for this is contained in Scripture*. Peter reminds us that the Prophet Isaiah, hundreds of years before Christ was born, foretold of the joy and hope that those who set their lives upon Him would have. **Isaiah 28:16** says, *‘Behold I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone, for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.’* Now let's compare this with Peter's commentary on that verse – *“Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.”* This is the concept that Peter is reminding them of. That he who places their faith in the Savior Jesus Christ, will not be disappointed. Now you may say, I've been disappointed in God's plan for my life from time to time. I don't understand why He allowed this or is allowing this to happen. But that's not what Peter is saying here.

This word 'disappointed' implies being deceived, placing our hope in someone and then having them be something else. Believing in Jesus is not a counterfeit faith or deceptive plan - we will not be deceived or put to shame, because Christ is exactly who God said He would be – we are not receiving false hope. Jesus is the Savior, and when you place your faith in Him, although the world disappoints, Christ never will! What a great encouragement it must have been to be reminded of these words. You have given up so much for the cause of Christ – you will not be disappointed!

What else do we learn about Jesus that has to do with us not being disappointed, in this verse? *“Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious cornerstone.”* There are two ideas I want to draw our attention toward. The first being “**Zion**”. When you see the word, Zion, in the Old Testament it either refers to Israel or more specifically Jerusalem. And so, Isaiah is saying that this choice stone, would be placed in Israel – which is exactly what happened hundreds of years following this prophecy. **God's Word can be trusted! It will not leave you disappointed.** And when Peter says that Christ...this stone laid in Zion is a **choice and precious cornerstone**, he means that He is God's Chosen One, sent for a specific purpose (to bring salvation) and as the Church we need to build our lives upon Him. The word 'precious' means valuable and irreplaceable. This

reminds us that our relationship with Christ is the most valuable relationship in our lives. And when we place value in that relationship and build upon Him as our cornerstone, we will not be disappointed. Hear what I'm saying, 'Christ is the only relationship that won't disappoint, and the Word of God is the only truth that won't leave us dissatisfied.' Therefore, it must be treated as the most valuable thing in our lives.

Peter then continues on and points us to another privilege or blessing we have when we build upon Christ as our Cornerstone.

2. **We find Stability in Christ our Cornerstone.** (vv. 7-8)

"This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve: 'The stone the builders rejected, this became the very cornerstone', and 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense' for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed."

Let me remind you of what Peter is bringing our attention to here when he says that this precious cornerstone has become a stone of stumbling and offense to those who have rejected Him. Remember all of the Old Testament points to 2 things: 1) We are sinners heading toward judgement and 2) Because of sin, we need saving, so God would send a Messiah to save us from our guilty verdict. Well, one day in Israel, this guy named John the Baptist proclaimed the Messiah has come, the one the world has been longing for and seeking for hundreds of years – and he points Him out to them, it was this man named Jesus. So, for 3 years the eyes of Israel were watching Jesus closely, *would He be the promised Messiah?* They listened closely to the words He spoke, they observed the miracles He performed – in essence they picked up this stone and examined Him, turned Him over and over, seeking for undeniable signs that He was the promised Messiah, and after He was scrutinized and examined, they declared that He was not the Messiah and they threw Him out and rejected Him, declaring He doesn't fit, He's not the kind of Messiah they were looking for (they still say this today).

He was the stone the builders rejected. But they were wrong! To those who believe, we understand the precious value that this cornerstone has. But to those who have rejected Him, to those who disbelieve – **He is a stone of stumbling.** This is quoted from **Isaiah 8:14-15**, and refers to the fact that Jesus, the Messiah they threw out, would cause those who disbelieve to stumble, to trip over it. This Messiah would also be **a rock of offense.** This Greek word "offense" is the same word used to describe 'the trigger of a trap on which the bait is placed, and which, when touched by an animal would cause the trap to spring close causing entrapment or death.' So, they stumble right into a trap that brings spiritual entrapment and death, *because they are disobedient to the word.* They knew the word, they knew the prophecies, they knew the Gospel, but they chose to reject Jesus as their Savior. He was not the Messiah they thought He would be, and so they threw Him aside, only to stumble over him into judgment, being blinded by their disbelief, not knowing that this Messiah was truly the precious cornerstone of salvation in which God would build His Church upon.

And then **Peter adds**, *"and to this doom they were also appointed."* This is the portion of this verse that people get confused over. They believe that God has created those who

would reject Christ, without a chance to obey - they understand (incorrectly) this verse to mean that their disobedience was destined, that is to say that they had no choice. If that were true, then so many passages that speak of Christ dying for everyone and God sending a Savior for the entirety of the world would come in conflict with this verse. So, what is Peter saying? Peter is saying that their **doom is appointed because of their unbelief**. You see, Jesus our Savior, is a controversial figure in history because He is either a precious cornerstone of value or a stone which causes one to trip and fall into judgment. You either believe and are saved or you reject Him and are destined to eternal judgment. There is no middle ground with Jesus Christ. And depending on who He is to you, your future destination is set (that's what the word 'appointed' means in the Greek – 'to set'). So, the benefit for those who have set their lives upon the Chief cornerstone, is one of stability! Your future is set, it is secure when you believe in Christ and set your life upon Him. What a benefit! To know your future is secure and set changes your perspective on everything in this life. It gives eternal perspective to trials, to difficulty, to sorrow, to everything in life!

So, Peter tells us that if we place our faith in Christ and build our lives upon Him we won't be disappointed, and then he warns us that doom will come to those who reject Him. He then encourages us that in Him we find our new identity.

3. **We find Salvation and Identity in Christ our Cornerstone.**

(vv. 9-10)

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

It is in these verses Peter draws a beautiful contrast, those who disbelieve are doomed based upon the disbelief, but those who believe *are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession*. Each of these titles are meant to encourage all who believe of the truth that because of salvation we have a new identity in Christ.

We are a chosen race – *“For you are a holy nation to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the nations on earth, to be His own.”* God is speaking directly to and of Israel, His chosen race, in this passage found in Deuteronomy 7:2, but now He is saying this about all those who believe in Christ.

We are a royal priesthood – the emphasis here is on 'royal', we already understand that we are to be priests in verse 5, and how we have access to God Almighty able to approach the throne of God with confidence, offering spiritual sacrifices unto Him, but I believe when Peter uses the word 'royal' he is linking us to God and His royal kingdom. And this carries with it a future significance, for **Rev. 20:6** says that *“We will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”* It is during this millennial reign of Christ that He will reign and we will reign with Him as priests. This will be and is an awesome privilege.

So, in Christ we are a chosen race, we are a royal priesthood, and we are a holy nation. We are a holy nation – the word “holy” means ‘set apart, sanctified, consecrated.’ So Peter is telling us that in Christ we are a nation called to live holy lives.

We are God’s own possession – This reminds me of Paul’s words in **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** he says, *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body.”* God purchased you and me with the blood of Christ. And often times when something is purchased it is done for a purpose.

What is the purpose of our purchase? *“So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of the darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”*

For what reason were we purchased? In order to share the message of the Gospel with the world around us – and to share the reason for new identity in Christ. One that now receives the benefits of being the people of God full of mercy.

Conclusion

So, as Peter writes to the suffering Church, he reminds them of the blessings of being connected to the Chief Cornerstone and he reminds them that they have now been called into action – to proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called them into His marvelous light.

So, I leave you **two questions**:

1. Who is Jesus to you? Is He your Savior?
2. Are you using your life, with the purpose, to proclaim the Gospel to all those around you?

Let’s pray