

The Stabilizing Power of Our Identity in Christ Part 3

Our Identity in Christ

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Continuing our series of messages from this section of 1 Peter, particularly verses 4 to 10, it's our third message in a series on this particular, these seven verses, 2-4 to 2-10, that we call "The Stabilizing Power of Our Identity in Christ." So that's the title again, the stabilizing power of our identity in Christ, part 3. We noted that Peter is writing to help believers to be strong, to stand firm in times of growing opposition, cultural hostility, spiritual enmity. They are Christians in the first century and at this time around 63 AD when he writes some 30 plus years since Jesus was crucified, resurrected, and ascended into heaven, and the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the people of God. So three decades into the life of the church, Peter writes this letter to believers in modern-day Turkey, Asia Minor, as recorded in the first verse of chapter 1, and he writes to help them to be strong in the Lord, to stand firm. They are going to experience more persecution. In fact, a massive persecution is going to break out in July of 64 AD in the aftermath of the burning of Rome, a fire that raged for seven days, almost three quarters of the city was destroyed, the emperor Nero looks for a scapegoat and he chooses Christians and an unimaginable persecution breaks out. And so in the providence of God, the Lord, and it spreads across the Roman Empire, particularly emanating out from Rome, in the providence of God, the Lord prepares the believers in Asia Minor for that upcoming persecution through this wonderful epistle. And so we said that what we've seen at one of the main themes that he keeps coming back to is that you'll have power to stand if you know who you are.

So the stabilizing power of our identity in Christ is the theme of this passage and indeed one of the major themes in the epistle. They are experiencing persecution. They're also experiencing difficulty in the mission that they have. We saw last week this passage was telling us as we've unpacked it the last two Sundays, that who are we and what are we to be about? We are the people of God. We are the temple of God. We're the priesthood of God. If you're a believer in Christ, you are part of his temple, that is, you're a part of the body of Christ that is the place for his presence and glory to dwell. You're part of the priesthood. We said last week our work is to offer up spiritual sacrifices. We are called to worship God. In whatever circumstance we find ourselves, our main business is to worship. We are worshipers. God has redeemed us from darkness and delivered us in the kingdom of his beloved Son and in that newfound joy, we are to praise him and we find our truest fulfillment in praising and worshiping God. And we're to make other people

worshippers. So we're to help one another worship and we're to make others worship. This is what the call of discipleship is. We make disciples, followers of Jesus, who are truly worshippers of Jesus. So that's our calling. We remember that and we remember what we're supposed to do.

Now, what we want to see today, though, is another key part of this text is Peter's attempt to help believers deal with the reality they face as they go into the world that is opposed to them. In particular, I think he has in view the fact that the message of the gospel, as glorious as it is, as wonderful as it is, as we who have received it, we marvel in the wonder that God loves us, yet when we take the message of Christ into the world, what we find is astonishing opposition and rejection. It's counter-intuitive. We would think because we now have eyes to see, ears to hear, we see the beauty of Christ, we take the message of Christ to the world and we are dumbfounded that they don't see him the way we see him, that instead of seeing him as we do, our dearest friend, our greatest treasure, they see him as an enemy and they resist him and reject him. And this is what he's going to describe in this passage. He talks about the incredible rejection of the Jewish people for Christ. In fact, you think about the experience of the believers who were going out on the mission of taking the gospel and making other people worshippers and sharing the good news which we must do. He's writing to a largely Gentile audience, mostly that is non-Jewish in origin, ethnic origin. There's some Jews probably in these churches, but a small minority, mostly Gentiles, and they're taking the message out and they're seeing that among their Gentile friends, among the Gentile acquaintances, that still the rate of return is not very high. When they share the gospel with Gentiles, they find that the large majority reject Christ. And that some do respond, that some enter through the narrow gate, for narrow is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life and few there are that find it, Jesus would say, and broad is the way of destruction and many go that way.

And so they see that even among the Gentiles, but even more, now think about it, they see the Gentiles, the majority, the large majority saying no to Christ but then when they encounter Jewish people, it is overwhelming rejection. Even though the Jewish faith, I mean, has been given to us, the Old Testament fulfilled in Jesus, who is Jewish, his 12 disciples are Jewish, they take the gospel out, Jews are the first missionaries throughout the church, every place the gospel goes in Paul's ministry he starts in the synagogue preaching to Jews, and yet what happens over time is more and more and more the door of Jewish belief closes, slams shut. And so they find themselves as Christians in a world that is hostile to them because it's hostile to Christ and they have something of an apologetic problem, that is, the defense of the faith. One of the ways that Satan is tempting them is to wonder, you know, how can this be true if so few people respond in affirmation and acceptance? How can this gospel be true? How can this gospel be true? How can Jesus truly be the Messiah when the Jewish people are overwhelmingly rejecting his Messiahship? How can he be the King of the Jews when they are saying no to his reign? You see the challenge that was and is.

And so Peter is going to help them understand you're still to be about your business of worshipping and glorifying God, and delighting in his presence, and making his glory known, and sharing the message of the good news of Jesus Christ, understanding that not

many will respond and it was one of the great comforts is he's going to basically say in this passage, he quotes the Old Testament three times to say, "Listen, God prophesied it was going to be exactly this way." And ultimately, other Scripture teaches us that the reason they reject Christ is because of the insanity of sin, the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Jesus said men love darkness rather than light for their deeds are evil. The heart of sinners, our hearts before we are redeemed, though we may pretend at religion, our hearts are determined to have our own way and to make God be what we want him to be. And so when the true God shows up, the sinful heart of man, children of Adam, all of us come into the world resisting his reign. And so when we see Christ, we see in Jesus Christ the image of God fully made known. People looked at Christ and they saw the glory of God and what do people who hate God do when they see the glory? They reject him. And so when you take the message and you speak it plainly and clearly and you use the word of God and you make Jesus known, what can you expect? Often that people in seeing that will reject it and he's telling us this, and particularly this fact of the Jewish rejection in these passages so that we'll not lose heart because it's discouraging to encounter that kind of rejection, isn't it? You care about people, you love people, you want to see them saved and you proclaim Christ and yet this is the response.

So he wants to help us with that issue. The stabilizing power of our identity in Christ and what we're going to focus on today is the "in Christ" part because he's really wanting us to look at Jesus, particularly in this passage as well, and we haven't unpacked this angle of the text we want to this morning. So let's read these verses together. 1 Peter 2:4-10.

4 And coming to Him [that is, Christ] as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 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." 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," 8 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. 9 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; 10 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.

Let's pray together.

Father, we ask that You might by the power of Your Holy Spirit, open Your word to us. Take these things, Lord, these truths and apply them to our hearts. Grant to everyone

eyes to see and ears to hear. May Your word accomplish its purpose. May it give us greater love for Christ, greater humility of heart, brokenness over our sin, and delight in our Savior. We pray this in His name. Amen.

The stabilizing power of our identity in Christ. What we see as we come to this passage, you know, as we unpack the word of God, we often find things and issues that are certainly unpleasant. I mean, this is one of the things about expository preaching that I think is why the church is supposed to be fed expository preaching, that is, you let the text direct the sermon. You try to see what the emphasis of the passage is, and that's what drives the sermon, not what the pastor wants to talk about, not what he thinks people want to hear. Do you understand that? So my burden is to deliver to you faithfully what the text says, how it says it. So it deals with things that you probably didn't come to church wanting to know, to talk about and think about, how frustrating it is to share the gospel and be rejected, and then if this continues to intensify and grow, how are we to bear up. That's just not feel good messages. But this is what God has given us and his word is what we need more than anything else. So may the Lord help us to understand how this applies to us and what real joy comes. You know, when you first find passages of Scripture, this is such a wonderful truth, so often the Bible will confront you in a way that you feel like you've been hit in the mouth. "Really? I don't understand." You're perplexed. You wonder. You question. But if you humble yourself and you stay in the word and you keep listening to God and looking at his word and seeing how it all fits together, it becomes something that is beautiful and wonderful and glorious and you see his ways are not our ways, his thoughts are not our thoughts. No, they're not. For as high as the heavens are above the earth are his ways above our ways and his thoughts above our thoughts. They are far more marvelous, far more wonderful, far more life transforming than what you or I would ever ask for.

So the stabilizing power of our identity in Christ. How do we understand the rejection of the Jewish people of the Messiah? How are these Gentile believers to understand that as they try to go about now being the people of God? I want three points this morning. The first is we need to understand the stabilizing power of our identity in Christ by seeing the sovereignty of God in salvation. The sovereignty of God in salvation, and we see this a couple of ways in the text. First of all, actually three subpoints. The first is that the rejection of the Jewish people was prophesied. Peter takes three different Old Testament passages and quotes each one in this text. He quotes from Isaiah 28:16 in verse 6 and in verse 7, the first quotation is from Psalm 118:22, and the last quotation is from Isaiah 8:14. Now he takes those passages to show us, listen, God has laid his foundation stone, Christ, and Christ is precious. Christ is what everyone needs to build their life upon. Christ is the solid rock that everyone needs. And yet, even the builders, that is the Jewish people whom God had called to be the place that he prepared the message or the people for Christ, even the builders have rejected him. But he says, listen, he quotes these three passages, all of which were written before 700 BC, more than 700 years before Christ was born. God told them in Isaiah 28 and Psalm 118 and Isaiah 8 that, listen, when the Messiah comes, the cornerstone comes, the foundation stone, the thing that you're longing for, the builders will reject him.

That's one of those powerful testimonies to why you should trust the word of God is fulfilled prophecy. It is astounding. It is beyond supernatural. It is amazing how many prophecies are fulfilled in the way that they're fulfilled and exactly the way they're fulfilled in ways we could never even anticipate the beauty of how God puts it all together. You hear different numbers, more than 300 prophecies fulfilled in the life of Christ is one of the numbers that you look at and here are three passages that are looking to who Christ is and how he would be received and more than 700 years before we see this prophesied.

He will be rejected by the Jewish people. How can that be? It makes no sense, really, because the Jewish people should have known. They should have known who to expect. But such is the reality and the evil of sin that even those who had the most light when he came in the fullness of his glory came, they shoved him away. It was prophesied. Secondly, it's interesting in verse 8 it says after the second quotation is completed in verse 8, I mean, the final quotation, third quotation, "stone of stumbling and rock of offense, for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word and to this doom they were also appointed." They were appointed. This doom they were appointed. To this disobedience they were appointed. It speaks of the sovereignty of God, that God is at work even in the rejection of men to his Messiah. God is at work. Even when people come against you or me, God is sovereignly at work. He is reigning and ruling over every single molecule in the universe. You read your Bible carefully, there's no other way to come to any other conclusion than that. You have to deny Scripture to have a God that is less than completely sovereign.

And listen, sovereignty of God brings questions with it. It's troubling in ways, but I love what Jonathan Edwards said about it. As a young man, he was wrestling with the sovereignty of God in salvation, the sovereignty of God over all things, even over evil that happens, and he was struggling with it and yet, the more that he read the Scriptures and he prayed and he was asking God, "Lord, how can You allow this? How can You do this?" And the Scripture continued to comfort his heart until finally he saw in a deeper way that God's sovereignty and how it works together is so beautiful, and from thereafter, he always called sovereignty sweet sovereignty. No doctrine more sweet than to know that God is reigning and ruling over every single thing that happens.

You see this in so many clear ways. Let me just show you because in Peter's preaching, the man who's writing this, let's look back to Acts, the first few chapters of Acts, Acts, 2, Peter's great sermon at the day of Pentecost. Remember, they the Holy Spirit's been poured out upon the apostles in Jerusalem. They go out and they're able to speak in different languages to the other Jews that have gathered from all over the known world. Because it's Pentecost, they've made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem these Jews who come from all over the Roman world, and they're able to speak in their native tongue to them. And they can't make sense of it. Peter gets up and begins to explain it in verse 14. And then coming down to verse 22, he says this, "Men of Israel, listen to these words," Acts 2:22, "Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know this Man," and look at the next words, "delivered over by the predetermined plan and

foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." You see the sovereignty of God, responsibility of man right there side-by-side. It was godless men who put him to death. In their wickedness, they did it and yet it was by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, the sovereignty of God, God ruling over all; even the raging of Satan himself, God rules over it.

Turn to chapter 4. This is the message of the apostles, Peter among the group here. In verse 27, well, actually, let's look at verse 25 because they quote from Psalm 2, thinking again about the way that evil responds to the message of Christ, the message of God. Verse 25 of Acts 4, "who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said," he's talking, they're talking to the Jewish people about their rejection. "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things? The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ." They're saying, listen, when when Jesus was crucified, what happened was the rulers of Rome and the rulers of the Jews gathered together against Christ, just like Psalm 2 said. They're raging against God and raging against the one who's making God known and they gathered together against Christ, a fulfillment of Psalm 2. Verse 27, "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur."

That's the beauty of the sovereignty of God. You see, the hatred of man in the cross of Christ was in the truest sense, at the same time, the greatest and most despicable act of evil in sinless man that has ever occurred. It was the most heinous, most evil, consummation of evil imaginable and it was also the outpouring of the sovereign love of God at the same time because it is in Christ's death as he's turned over, given over to Satan. When they come to the garden, he says, "Why didn't you come to me during the daytime? I've been publicly around. Why didn't you come?" He said, "This is the hour of darkness. This is your hour and the hour of darkness. You see, I've been given over to you. The Father has pulled back his hand, and now you're able to come in and do what you've always wanted to do but now is the time." And so God is pouring out his wrath on his own Son. He's pulling back his hand of protection and Jesus, the Christ, the sin-bearer, is about to go to the cross and bear the wrath of God, the punishment that everyone who has ever lived deserved to be separated from God forever. He's experiencing separation from God on the cross. He's experiencing, even as he makes his way out of the garden, he's being abandoned to evil and to the control of that but it's exactly what God has determined.

I love how 1 Corinthians 2 sees this. 1 Corinthians 2:9 and 10. We'll actually start at verse 7 talking about the wisdom of God versus the wisdom of man. He says, "we speak God's wisdom," 1 Corinthians 2:7, "we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood." The rulers would say he's talking about, at the same time, satanic powers and also the men who opposed Christ, like Pontius Pilate and Herod. He's talking about both at the same time. "If the rulers of this age had understood the wisdom of God, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." If they had known what they were doing, they wouldn't have done it because in the crucifixion of the Lord

of glory, they were defeated finally and completely forever. Christ, the wisdom of God was in giving up his Son and his Son bearing our sins, he took away Satan's hold on his kingdom and he destroyed it. So the sovereignty of God is at work in even the rejection of Christ.

So back to 1 Peter 2. Third area you see this, and this is still point 1C, I guess. We looked at prophesied, we looked at appointed, now we look at the key word choice or chosen. This is a key word in this passage is the word choice, chosen, elect, depending on the translation you're reading. It's said twice of Christ. He is the chosen or choice stone, verse 4 and verse 6. Verse 4, he's choice and precious. Verse 6, "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone." What's interesting then in 1 Peter 2.9, after he's talked about the doom of those to whom it was appointed, the next phrase after that is "you are chosen." They were appointed, but you are chosen. You are a chosen race. God sovereignly appointed them. We're going to see, it's not the same. He didn't choose them to reject him. It's not the same. It's not double predestination, but predestination, he predestines believers to heaven. He chooses us. He chose us. You are a chosen race. Again, this is a complex concept. It's one we have to keep wrestling with as we look at the Bible, but if you read your Bible carefully, you can't fail to notice how much it talks about the sovereignty of God. You are elect. You are chosen, chosen in him before the foundation of the world.

It's interesting too, the language is emphatic in verse 9. It says basically, you yourselves are a chosen race. It can be translated that way because it adds in Greek, like a lot of languages, the pronoun is already present in the verb. You know, in English we don't have this. You have to always add a pronoun. The pronoun is not present in the verb, but in Greek, in many languages, the pronoun is already there in the verb. And so it could say you are chosen, but what it does here is it says you with the pronoun, second person plural for "you," you are chosen. So the fact is you yourselves are chosen. They have been appointed to be disobedient, which means unbelieving, but you are chosen. It's the sovereignty of God. So when you see some who don't receive and you yourselves do receive the message and some do receive the message, give glory to God. And I think you're going to see in a moment, don't ask why those don't believe. That's not the amazing thing. The amazing thing is why you do believe.

So the sovereignty of God, understanding that the sovereignty of God and election in Christ gives us strength and stability. The second point is the responsibility of man. Here you have a passage which puts the sovereignty of God right beside the responsibility of man. It makes no apology for it. He doesn't try to explain it. He just says it's both are true. You say, "Well, if God chooses, well, then how can they be responsible?" God says, "I choose and they're responsible." So how can that be? God says, "I choose and they're responsible. Believe what I say or believe what you think." What makes more sense to you? I mean, it's one of those things, you know, what makes more sense to you ought to be what doesn't make sense to you because to trust in ourselves, as little as we know, is actually the most foolish thing we could do. We have a perfect word from God that is perfect; from Genesis to Revelation he's spoken, he's given us his way of seeing the world. We have the owner's manual who created everything to tell us exactly how it works. Are you going to just go with what your kind of experience is or are you going to believe what he says in his word?

The responsibility of man. I want you to note this. He puts unbelief, the responsibility for unbelief is not God's, it is the unbeliever's. Look at how he emphasizes this. The responsibility of man, first of all, talking about the rejection of the Jewish leaders and the Jewish people. Key word in the passage is the word "rejected." Verse 4, the responsibility of man is the rejection of the Jewish leaders and the Jewish people. Verse 4, "And coming to Him as to a living stone," you would think it would go right on to how much Jesus is precious and chosen but what he interjects, "which has been rejected by men." It's a very strong word, "rejected." The same word is repeated in verse 7 where he quotes from Psalm 118:22 and he says in verse 7, "This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the very corner stone.'" This word "rejected" both places, it's a strong word. Basically, it's the word which we normally think of tried and approved, dokimazo. You try something to prove it, to see if it's genuine, and then once you test it, it's now approved. It speaks of careful examination, thorough investigation. And so you look at it carefully, you weigh it, you evaluate it and normally dokimazo means you test it and you approve it. But this word is apo dokimazo, which means you test it, you look at it, you come to see what its quality is, and you thrust it away from you. That's the rejection of the Jewish people for Christ, that is, it's not a result of ignorance. It is done with full knowledge. The Jewish people reject Christ and unbelievers who have heard the gospel and reject Christ with that kind of firm, tenacious rejection. It's not because they don't know, it's because they know, according to the text.

One translation says "cast away as worthless." They look at it, they test it, they test Christ, they evaluate him, they see, they looked at him, they looked at his teaching, they looked at his miracles, they carefully examined him, they saw he was from God and they cast him away as worthless. You know, the parable of the tenants, you remember that Jesus tells this parable right before the last week of his life before he was crucified. The parable of the tenants, he's speaking to the Jewish leaders and he tells them a parable of a man who had a vineyard and he was going to a far land and he left it in the care of some tenant workers and they were to, you know, when the crop came in, they were to take it, sell it and to give him the part that was appropriate to him as the owner. They were to keep obviously some for wages themselves. And so the crop comes in and they don't send anything to the owner, the master. So he sends a servant to collect and they beat up the servant and humiliate him and send him on his way. He sends another servant. They do the same thing. Finally he thinks, "I'll send my own son. Surely they'll respect him." They see the son and Jesus says they saw the son, they recognized he was a son and they said, "Because he is the son, he is the heir, let's kill him and take the vineyard for ourselves." That's what he said the Jews did because they knew he was who he said he was, they rejected him. This is the insanity of unbelief and this means that when people are passed over by God and not chosen, the responsibility for their damnation is fully upon them according to Scripture. These things are hard words, but they are true.

He says that, he emphasizes belief versus unbelief. He says in verse 6, "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." The wonderful beauty of the corner stone, if you trust in him, if you put all of your weight on him, you will not be disappointed. And then he says this preciousness,

this costly treasure value is for you who believe, but for those who disbelieve, the stone the builders rejected became the very corner stone. In the original, the word "believing" is right beside the word "unbelieving or disbelieving" in the text. Greek can move words around, and so there's no intervening word. It's those who are believin, and the next word is those who are unbelieving, not believing. It's heightening. The issue is how does someone respond to Christ? Do they believe when they hear the message or do they reject?

In fact, this is emphasized even more when you look at the end of verse 8, when it says, he's a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, "for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word." That word "disobedient" translates a word which literally in the original means unpersuadable. The reason they don't obey is because they won't be persuaded. The idea, again, is they look at the evidence, the evidence is compelling and conclusive, but they will not believe because they will not be persuaded by the evidence.

Look with me at 1 Corinthians 1 for a minute. We were in chapter 2 just a minute ago. We saw the rulers of this age don't understand the wisdom of God. Chapter 1 helps us understand that, listen, the message of the gospel, the message that brings life, that is the greatest message of love the world has ever known is the gospel. It is the expression – listen to me – it is the expression of God's tender-hearted kindness, his lovingkindness, his generosity is the gospel. He's saying to you and to me, "Come to Me. Come and be saved. No matter how sinful you are, though your sins are as scarlet, I'll make them white as snow. Come to Me, you are hungry, and I will satisfy your hunger. Come to Me, you are thirsty, I will satisfy your thirst. Just acknowledge your sin, turn from it, and come to Me and be saved." That's the message we preach, and that is the message that unbelievers find so offensive. It's astonishing.

1 Corinthians 1:18, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." You see the radical contrast. Jesus, and particularly Christ crucified, is the watershed of all human history. You come to that issue, and the question is, will you receive Christ and him crucified, or will you reject Christ and him crucified? It's foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it's the power of God. "For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." Part of what God's saying here is, he is the one who possesses all knowledge, man in sin, the pride of man in sin is so great that we want to make our own way to God, we want to contribute to our salvation, and the message of the cross says to you and me, you and I can contribute nothing. And so the message of the cross is the most humbling message we could hear. There's nothing good in you, nothing good in me, only Jesus.

Look what he says in verse 23, "we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness." In fact, that word stumbling block is the same word we find back in 1 Peter 1 for stumbling block, or actually rock of offense is the way it's translated

in 1 Peter 1, and the idea is that which trips you, trips you up, makes you angry. You know, if you're walking and you hit a corner of a table, as you get older, have you had this problem, I start bumping into things more than I used to? Anybody else? Okay, good, I'm glad I'm not the only one. You find yourself hurting yourself for no reason at all. "Bam, you know, what am I doing?" And so, you know, bumping into things and stuff. So if you really hit something and it really hurts, you know that feeling of anger at the thing? "What are you doing being there in my way?" You know, like, you just want to take your anger out on it. That's the idea that he's getting at in this passage and also back in 1 Peter 1. When they encounter Christ who is the foundation stone that is everything we need to build upon, to lay ourselves upon, to cast our hope upon, what happens is because he humbles us and unbelievers, when they come to that, will not believe, they trip over him and they're angered by it. They're enraged by it. This is what he's saying here.

"We preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness." To Jews, particularly, they find it offensive as pride, and the Gentiles find it foolishness. The word here actually translates as "moros," which could be transliterated "moronic or moron." The Gentiles see it as idiocy. The Jews see it as offensive. But look at the difference, "but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Back to chapter 2 of 1 Peter. The responsibility of man is seen in the rejection and the unbelief and as I just mentioned, I want you to see this in verse 7 and 8, the stone which the builders rejected became the very corner stone, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. These three terms, "the very cornerstone, stone of stumbling and rock of offense," are all aimed at basically heightening the sense of rejection that people have when they turn away from Christ. Very corner stone has the idea that God went out looking and searching everywhere he could look to find the perfect cornerstone and he found a one of a kind, no other has ever existed. He found the perfect corner stone. He brings it. He sets it down and what happens is it becomes a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. It becomes that which causes people to trip up and be angry and to be a rock of offense is the word scandal, scandalized. They stumble because they're disobedient to the word. They're not persuaded. They're not willing to trust in Jesus.

So the sovereignty of God does not negate the responsibility of man. So we need to understand the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Listen, an amazing thing again is that you and I believe it's only by grace that we do, and we see someone come to life in the preaching of the gospel, it's to the praise of the glory of God's grace. He sent forth his word and he's opened their eyes. This is why Jesus constantly said, "Let him who has ears to hear, hear." You need to ask God for ears to hear. And listen, what you must understand is if you're hearing this message and you're not sure if you're a believer, God is saying, "Listen, if you want to believe, you can be saved." Don't let the idea of God's sovereign election keep you from coming to Christ because the message that God says again and again is repent and believe the gospel. And if you come to him, he will not disappoint you. If you trust in him, you will not be disappointed.

That brings us to our third point this morning, the surpassing glory of Christ. To understand this, we need to understand the sovereignty of God, the responsibility of man, and the surpassing glory of Christ, the perfection of Jesus even though the world rejects him, it is amazing to watch how the world rejects him. You know, I remember watching, some of you guys that are old enough to remember after 9-11 when, like Larry King, you remember Larry King, some of you guys, CNN? Back in the day, had various religious leaders from around the world. This is around 2002, right after 9-11. He had, you know, Deepak Chopra, a new age kind of guy, you know, Eastern religion. He had a Roman Catholic priest. He had a Jewish rabbi, a Muslim cleric, and he had John McArthur. Five guys and if you watched it, you know what I'm going to say right now. It was basically four guys against one. The Muslim teamed up with the Jew and the Catholic and the Eastern religion guy, and they were constantly all attacking John. Why? Because John was basically saying, "It is Jesus. He's the answer." In the name of Jesus, the great watershed, the character of Christ, and the work of Christ, the cross of Christ, everything unites against him but don't let that discourage you because that's the opinion of men. But let's look at God's opinion of Christ.

In verse 4, I mentioned the word "choice and precious" a moment ago. Look at this again, "And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God." When God looks at Jesus, he is the elect one. He is the chosen one. He is the precious one that is of great value. Then down in verse 6, in Isaiah 28, he said, "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed." Same words, "choice, precious, elect" again. In verse 7, "this precious value," that's the same root word. "Costly, valuable." He's saying, look, God sees Jesus. When God looks at Jesus, he sees the one, the perfect one.

I want to say another word about what he says in verse 6, a precious corner stone. This actually means the word translated "precious" here from the Old, I mean, corner actually from the Old Testament is the idea of a word which speaks from the farthest bounds. It's an adjective meaning you had to go to the farthest limits, the extremity of the area to find it. So he's saying that Jesus is that which you can find nowhere else. You can look all over humanity, all over history, you can walk through, if you could live long enough and you had a time machine and you could go every single place and every single time, there is only one Jesus, and God has found him, and God has said, "This is the One." In verse 7, he is the very corner stone, that is literally the head of the corner. He's the greatest. And the idea of corner, he is the point at which everything turns. Your response to Jesus.

Verse 6 is such an encouraging verse when he says, the first quotation, "For this is contained in Scripture: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, that he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.'" I want to show you the context of that. That's a quote from Isaiah 28. Look with me in Isaiah 28 talking about how wonderful Jesus is. How wonderful it is to build your life upon Christ. The context of this is so important. This chapter is describing what's going to happen to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. At this point in history, the nation of Israel has become two kingdoms, the northern kingdom actually still called Israel and the southern kingdom called Judah. Judah is the kingdom that has Jerusalem in it, which is where the temple is, and so God is particularly with his people in the southern kingdom because that's where his glory

dwells, and he's riding through Isaiah to the southern kingdom and he's basically telling them in chapter 28, the northern kingdom of Israel is about to be eradicated by the Assyrians and when it is devastated by the Assyrians, they're going to come into the southern kingdom and it's going to be rough for us. I mean, we're going to experience all kinds of turmoil. And he uses an image of like a great flood coming in. It's going to be like one of these floods that, you know, like, well, the hurricanes that have brought so much water up onto the land and you see, you know, I remember the hurricane this fall in Florida, and you saw was it, I forget the island, but near Fort Myers where the area is just totally devastated, everything knocked down. He's describing this kind of calamity for the nation of Judah.

And you see it in verse 15. Now, verse 16 is where he's going to give the promise but well, let's look at verse 14 and 15 as we read into verse 16. "Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, O scoffers, Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem," you see, he's writing to the southern kingdom and there are people scoffing, thinking they don't have to worry about it. They think God's going to take care of them because they have a form of religion, but not truly worshipers of God. "Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, O scoffers, Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem, Because you have said, 'We have made a covenant with death, And with Sheol we have made a pact. The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by, For we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception.' Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, '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. I will make justice the measuring line And righteousness the level; Then hail will sweep away the refuge of lies And the waters will overflow the secret place. Your covenant with death will be canceled, And your pact with Sheol will not stand; When the overwhelming scourge passes through, Then you become its trampling place." He's talking to the nation basically saying, "Look, all of you who are trusting in anything but Me, you are going to be wiped out but I'm laying in Zion a corner stone. I'm laying in Zion a foundation stone that you are to build upon." And the Jews who were alive at that time were to place all of their hope in this coming Messiah and God is saying, "If you build upon Me, you're built upon a rock on a foundation. When the flood comes, you will stand."

I love what he says, "You will not be disturbed," is the translation here. Disappointed is how we read it in 1 Peter 2. The idea is actually to not be in haste and the picture is if you have calamity come at you all of a sudden, turmoil, you know, a tornado or a hurricane is on you, or a flood is coming and the panic that seizes you on the inside and you have to, you don't know what to do and you're running around, he's saying, "If you are building upon Christ, you will never be like that. When everything falls apart, you won't be in haste in your heart. You're going to wait a minute. I know the One who has all this in his hand. Lord, what are You doing in my life right now? What is Your purpose in this?" Knowing Jesus, the one who holds everything, knowing that it's not our righteousness anyway, there is therefore now if you believe in Jesus, there's no condemnation left for you. Judgment will not come upon you. Now the world may pass away. We may have, you know, our house may fall, we may experience physical death, but spiritually, we cannot be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus. And if you anchor your hope in that, no matter what happens, you will stand.

He will stand because his God will make him stand. God will make you stand. It's the preciousness of Jesus. He is a solid rock. You place your hope in him, you trust in his finished work, what he did at Calvary, and you will never, ever taste the wrath of God. "It is finished," he said. I love that. Remember when he was on the cross, the sky went completely dark to symbolize that he now is bearing sin and it went dark because God is light and in him is no darkness at all. And so the Father, in a sense, has turned his back on Christ. That's visually what's being represented. He's bearing our sins. The wrath of God, the abandonment of the Father in some way we can't understand is happening and he is bearing this. That's why he cries out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Alone bearing our sins. And then after hours pass, finally at 3 p.m., he says, "It is finished." And those words in the language Jesus spoke, Aramaic, would be stamped on documents, written on documents to say this bill has been paid in full. So he says, "It is finished. The debt is paid in full." He says, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." He dies. The veil of the temple is torn from top to bottom. The way is made into the Holy of Holies for those who trust in him. The wrath of God has been taken away forever. If you believe in Jesus Christ, if you're willing to accept the humbling gospel that says you and I can do nothing and for us to be saved Christ had to go through that, if you will accept that, you are building on a foundation and your foundation will stand until the day of eternity until you see his face.

And that's the wonderful message that we share. It's the most loving and kind thing that we can share with anyone is to tell them about Jesus. But the text is saying, listen, sometimes they're not going to understand. Don't get angry with them but for the grace of God, you'd be doing the same thing. It's only God's grace that's given you eyes to see and ears to hear. And those of you who are hearing it and you're not wondering if you have eyes to see and ears to hear, just cry out to Jesus and say, "Lord Jesus, give me eyes to see and ears to hear," and read his word. He will save you. He is a gracious, compassionate Savior and we have the joy of knowing him and taking that message and making more and more people worshipers. Yeah, most people are going to reject him, but those who are not going to reject him, we're going to see life born in them, the joy of Christ rise up in them and have new family members. This is what God is calling us to do until Jesus comes back. That's a worthy occupation. Let's get to work.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we thank You for the glory of the gospel. We thank You for giving Jesus Christ to us, that You would leave the glory of heaven, Lord Jesus, and become a man and experience what You experienced, bearing our sins and yet then giving us Your perfect righteousness because You lived a perfect life, perfect righteousness. You give and exchanged us for our sins. How can it be? And yet it is. Father, we pray that You would make us people of the gospel more and more and more, that we would just drink it in continually, those who already know You, and those who don't would respond to You today. Today is the day of salvation. Repent and believe on Christ. Thank You that You are God who is always saying, "Come, come unto Me, you who are weary and heavy laden, I'll give you rest. Come, come drink from the waters without cost." Father, help them come. Be glorified in Your people. Make us strong in the Lord. Make us able to

stand up in whatever You bring in our way because knowing that whatever comes is what You have lovingly brought to us. You're not surprised. You're not caught off guard, even though we might be and if we just trust in You and rest in You, Lord Jesus, in that moment, we will stand because You are the corner stone. Be glorified in Your people. We pray in Your name. Amen.