

FOUNDED OR CONFOUNDED?

“Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh, behold I establish in Zion a stone—a tested stone, a stone of priceless glory; a secure foundation—he who trusts in it shall not be confounded” (Isaiah 28:16) (Author’s Translation).

God promises His people the everlasting security of the priceless cornerstone—Jesus Christ. Although this promise is given primarily to Israel, a number of passages in the New Testament give us the liberty of applying it to the Church as well. For example, in Ephesians 2:20, Paul refers to Christ as the “Chief Cornerstone.” In II Timothy 2, he speaks of Christ as the “sure foundation.” Peter refers to Christ as the stone which the builders rejected and which became the “Head of the Corner.” So the same security that was offered to Israel is offered also to the Church.

We have been studying I Peter 5:10. We have seen the limitless grace of God and the destiny of glory for His people. We have seen the power of God exhibited in His deliverance and restoration. We are now given the promise of complete strength and security in the fulfillment of God’s purposes for His people.

Far from confident and secure, the people of God today are fearful and insecure and guilt-ridden. Such feelings of guilt and insecurity are often fostered by ambitious religious leaders who want leverage to keep the people in a position of subservience to them. Such ambition is rampant in the Church, often cloaked by zeal for Christ and His work. It is often rather an expression of the American “success syndrome.” If people are at peace, they are less likely to pay for “protection” from the alleged wrath of God. In one sense of the word, some leaders may be guilty of running a “protection racket.” “If you do not give to the Lord, He will not prosper you or protect you from the enemy.” Dire consequences are predicted for those who fail to perform adequately. Conversely, proper giving and serving is promoted as a means of prosperity. In recent times, a noted religious television personality even used God as a party to a “hostage” scheme which was fabricated to induce giving on the basis of threats to his life.

In contrast to this, Peter offers complete strength and security, not conditioned upon human strength or performance. ***“The God of all grace who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus . . . establish, strengthen, and put a foundation under you.”*** The promise of security is prefaced by the bold declaration of God’s abundant grace and glorious purposes for His people. The Greek word for “grace” means “a flow of divine benevolence.” God’s people are carried along in the river of His grace and then, we are told, we are called unto His eternal glory. The river of His grace carries us along to our ultimate destiny in His eternal glory.

With that as a prelude, we are then told that He restores us from our lost condition and holds us steadfast, gives us inner strength, and establishes us on His sure foundation. The word translated “establish” is from the Greek word *stereos*. We get a number of English words from it, as, for example, stereophonic, stereopticon, stereotype. All of these words have to do with a fixed

position. In stereophonic music, you have two tracks which remain fixed and never mix, but always remain a part of the score, giving the dimensional sound. A stereotype is a fixed concept. We are held steadfast and unmovable in the grip and power of God. The Psalmist says, **“He only is my rock and my salvation; a defense; I shall not be greatly moved”** (Psalm 62:2). He may totter, but he will not fall. And David says in Psalm 37—**“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand”** (23,24). In the same vein, Jude, a thousand years later, says, **“Unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”** We may stumble and totter as befits our earthly inadequacies, but our position is secure in Christ. Moses spoke of this 3,000 years ago—**“The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms”** (Deuteronomy 33:27).

So we are kept steadfast under the “mighty hand of God.” And, we are also given strength. Not physical strength, which is never promised; nor strength of the human mind, as Paul himself confessed; but the strength of God for our inner spirits. Paul prays for the Ephesians that God would grant them **“to be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man”** (Ephesians 3:16). This is a promise to the weak—not to the strong. To the Corinthians, Paul said, **“Therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, for when I am weak, then I am strong”** (II Corinthians 12:9). Thus, though human behavior is certainly important, our security lies not in our human strength or excellence, but in the sacrifice and the ceaseless inner presence of His Holy Spirit within.

And, He builds a foundation under us. That is the force of the Greek word—*themelion*—which is often translated by “establish” or “settled.” Again, Paul prays for the Ephesians that Christ would dwell [settle down] in their hearts, through faith; that they would be rooted in the love of Christ and have His love as a foundation.” The love of Christ becomes at once a living root system to bring life and growth and a solid rock foundation—“the tested stone and the stone of glory.” The common translation—“precious”—is too weak here. It is a word that is much overworked and often carelessly applied. Like the English word “love,” it has lost most of its distinctive meaning. The expression “stone of glory” satisfies the requirement of the Hebrew construct state, as well as properly ascribing to Christ the position of honor not usually conveyed by the English word “precious.” We are not dealing here with one who delights His followers with “benevolent baubles,” like the indulgent and doting father. We are dealing with the God of the Universe whose power to sustain His people is limitless and inexorable.

The one who trusts [in Him] shall not be confounded. The translators have often missed the force of this word, “confounded.” “To make haste” as the King James has it, is accurate if we understand by that phrase “to act precipitously in a confused manner.” It has to do with scurrying about distractedly. The word “confound” expresses the meaning well. Resting on the solid rock, one may continue one’s earthly sojourn, not in distraction and confusion, but in the calm manner of those whose foundation is secure.

In the demand for high performance and productivity, as often reflected in today's leadership, Christians have become confused and confounded as to where their security lies. Jesus came to bring peace and rest for the weary and beleaguered souls of mankind. **"Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"** (Matthew 11:28-30). The word "easy" means "cut to fit." The yoke that Christ gives us fits our own gifts and temperaments. The yoke that others would put upon us is often ill-fitting and burdensome. When one is doing what Christ has gifted one to do, it is never burdensome. It may be difficult and sometimes disheartening, but never a burden. When one is at peace and secure in the power and grace of Christ, one is more clearly able to be sensitive to the directions of Christ for one. And when one responds to Christ in the spirit, one will not be going about in frenzy and confusion striving to accomplish in the flesh what can only be achieved through the spirit.

An unfortunate hallmark of today's Christian, under the religious promotions and mechanisms of the Church, is the sense that one has never done enough—that one can never really satisfy Christ. Remember, **"God is not the author of confusion, but of peace"** (I Corinthians 14:33). When God gives us an assignment, it will be characterized by the following criteria: 1) He will give us both the capacity and the compelling to do it; 2) It will not be burdensome to us; 3) It will be effective; and 4) We will be at peace about it. If what you are doing now is not meeting these criteria, perhaps you ought to re-examine the matter—whether you are doing it in response to God, or to some human assignment. When God is with us, we are securely founded upon a rock, but not confounded by human misconceptions.

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