

The One Foundation

by H.J. Vine

Christ is the only foundation that can provide stability and hope for eternity, as proven by His testing and perfection.

Scripture: Isaiah 28:16

Topics: "Jesus Christ", "Salvation"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the importance of Jesus Christ as the foundational Stone in the Scriptures, emphasizing that all building must be upon Him for true stability and blessing. Christ, the Sure Foundation, has been tested and proven perfect, enduring severe trials and remaining flawless in moral beauty. Despite being rejected by men, He is exalted by God as the Cornerstone and Head of the corner, offering salvation and unity to believers. The sermon also highlights Christ's future role in smiting the world-system and establishing His glorious administration on earth, filling the whole earth with His glory.

Transcript

Notes of an address given in Edinburgh in April, 1921

It was by the apostle to the Gentiles the Spirit of God said, "Other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." In these days, therefore, when every fundamental truth is vehemently assaulted, those who are of the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, do well to see to it that they allow nothing to move them away from Him, but rather have diligence to build one another up in Christ Jesus.

In the Scriptures which we have read (Gen. 49:24; Isa. 8:13-16; 28:16; Ps. 118:22; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-7 Dan. 2:34-35) the recurrence of the word "Stone," a title of our Lord Jesus Christ, indicates that construction or building is in the mind of the Spirit; just as when He is spoken of as the Shepherd, a flock is in view. In the former case, however, He Himself is a part of the structure--the most important and the pre-eminent part truly, yet still a part of the building--whereas the Shepherd is distinct from the sheep although He cares for them, and sees that not one of the flock shall perish (John 10).

Our verses cover a wide field, showing that Christ, and Christ only, is the Foundation for the nation of Israel, for the assembly, for the nations of the whole earth and for the individual. All national, ecclesiastical, imperial or individual building that has not our Lord Jesus Christ as its Foundation and Corner-stone must utterly fail sooner or later, but that will abide which is constructed upon and in Himself.

There are many other Scriptures which speak thus of the Lord. The first we read shows us His origin. He is from "the hands of the mighty God of Jacob," not from Joseph, as some might suppose, for, as our last Scripture tells us, He is "cut out without hands," that is, human hands. He is altogether Divine. He is directly from God's hands. What a stay for the souls of those who trust in Him! From the other verses we learn first the wonderful fact that He is "Jehovah of hosts Himself," also that He was tested before He became the Foundation-stone, and that when He was rejected by Israel's religious and political builders He became the Cornerstone of the assembly of God and the Head of the corner exalted in glory; finally, that He eventually overthrows the world-system--"the great image"--and fills the whole earth with His beneficent administration. The knowledge of such an One, Who is so great, so capable, so perfect and so glorious, gives true stability to the soul.

A Sure Foundation

In Isaiah 28, where our Lord Jesus Christ is introduced as the sure Foundation, woe is pronounced upon the pride of man and upon the excesses of his inebriation: his covenant of lies and agreement of falsehood shall be swept away! The crown of pride shall be trodden under feet and his glorious beauty become as a fading flower! And in that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty to the remnant who trust in Him. "Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a Foundation a Stone, a tried Stone, a precious Corner-stone, a sure Foundation: he that believes on Him shall not make haste" (v. 16).

It is the Supreme Ruler who lays this Foundation--the Lord God. He establishes it in Zion. There He sets the only Foundation of lasting order and blessing. The context shows that national establishment is specially in view, but more also is in the mind of the Spirit, for we read of His dealing with "the whole earth" (v. 22). This "cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working" (v. 29). All building owned of God rests upon the Foundation laid in Zion. There is none other. Sovereign grace is established in Christ, Who, though rejected of men, is exalted to the right hand of God.

What certain hope for eternity can anyone have apart from the only Foundation which God Himself has provided? To ignore it is to court the indignation of God! To refuse it is to secure His judgment! to own any other is presumption, the pride of which will be Divinely punished. Apart from this Foundation all must perish eternally.

"On Christ the solid Rock I stand,

All other ground is sinking sand."

The individual who rests here is safe. He is on a "Sure Foundation."

This Foundation has been tested, and it has proved itself to be Divinely perfect. The Stone has been "tried" as the prophet foretold. When we read the Gospels we see the tremendous testings He passed through, testings, however, which only brought into relief His intrinsic perfectness. Did Satan tempt Him in the wilderness--in three tremendous assaults seeking to move Him from dependence on God, to tempt God's care of Him, and to take the world-kingdoms and glory before God's appointed time? The devil was severely defeated, and he left Him Victor on the field alone, where the dependence, trust and patience of the Son of God shone in holy splendour. Was He oppressed and afflicted? No violence marked Him, neither was any deceit in His mouth: He committed no sin, neither did any guile proceed from His lips. Was He provoked, reviled and questioned? He meekly endured, reviling not again, but answered all with

grace and wisdom; and, then, enquiring concerning the Messiah that which His questioners could not answer--nor could they propound any further questions to Him--He remained victorious--the sinless, perfect, patient, meek and wise Lord and Saviour, the tested and triumphant Stone, the Divine Questioner who triumphed over His questioners, and the perfect Answer in Himself to His own enigma which they failed to explain; He was David's Son and David's Lord: David's offspring truly, but David's Root as well; and they were silent in His presence.

Did He suffer instead of reigning in royal greatness? He threatened not, but left Himself in the hands of Him who judges righteously. Did unrighteousness surge around Him? it caused Him sorrow, but His own personal righteousness was evidenced the more, for He was consistent in every relationship. Did unholiness and harshness abound? He was grieved, but the Holy One was untainted and Divine love showed itself in all His ways. Did falsehood and cruelty obtain? Truth and grace in blended beauty combined in Him. Did merciless injustice characterize men? In Him was expressed the mercy and justice of God. Did unhappiness, trouble and unrest fill the souls of men? His joy in communion with His Father was full, and His own peace was undisturbed whilst He invited others to come to Him to find rest for their souls. In contrast to the corruption and oppression which displayed the debasement of fallen man, His tested perfections' were seen to be flawless in their moral beauty.

The dreadful onslaughts of the power of darkness did but bring additional lustre to the excellencies of Jesus, just as the afflictions which beset Him from sinful man manifested the infinite worth which was already His, but when we see Him in the depths of suffering which came upon Him directly from the hand of God--when He took our place, bearing our sins and the judgment which was our due on account of them, when He endured the cross, we may well wonder that He could scathelessly come through such a fiery testing as that, and adore also the love that moved Him to bear it for our sakes and for the glory of our God and Father! And when we behold Him arise immortal and incorruptible from the tomb, the Victor over death and the grave, praises, everlasting praises, must fill our hearts, songs of rejoicing break forth from our tongues, and His worthiness our mouths must utter; for this "tried Stone" which bore all and failed not is our "Sure Foundation," and the ""Precious Corner-stone" of the building of God.

On Him our souls may recline without misgiving! Founded upon the Rock of Ages no tempest can overthrow us! The floods may break and the storms of time rage, thunders may roar mightily and the lightnings flash fearfully, thrones may fall and the nations be moved, men, great men may call to the rocks to hide them--fear may overtake them because of what is coming upon the world--but the tested Foundation upon which the feeblest believer rests in faith abides unshaken, unmoved and immovable! Our Lord Jesus Christ is a "Sure Foundation," and this has been fully proved, for He was the "tried Stone," and He has triumphantly manifested His intrinsic perfection amidst the severest trials. Who can doubt? How stable is this precious Ground of our faith! What stability is imparted to our souls by the knowledge of Himself!

"His Name's a Rock which winds above

Nor waves below can ever move,

Christ is our everlasting tower,

He braved the mighty tempest's roar,"

A Rejected Stone

It must, however, be remembered that the One who is everything to the assembly was rejected when presented to men. As "the Stone of Israel" He was cast away as worthless by the nation. This was foretold, as our Scriptures along with many others show. To the political and religious heads of the nation, Peter said, "This is the Stone which was set at nought by you builders, the same is become the Corner-stone, neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:11-12). In writing afterwards to those of Israel who had believed on the rejected One, He says, "To Whom coming, a living Stone, cast away as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious, yourselves also, as living stones are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:4).

It is the apostle to the Gentiles who writes thus to those who believed at Ephesus, "In whom all the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord, Jesus Christ Himself being the Corner-stone" (Eph. 2:21). The One who was rejected and crucified has been raised from among the dead by the power of God, and glorified at His right hand. Now for those called out from the Jews and those called out from the Gentiles the rejected Stone has become the Corner, where both meet and grow into one building in Him. Although rejected, He is, however, the chosen of God. Israel stumbled at the Stumbling Stone. Man refused Him, but God glorified Him: man treated Him as worthless and cast Him away, but to God He was precious and He honoured Him in heaven; and now to us the Corner-stone is precious also. Religious structures that are not fitted together in Him cannot be owned of God, for the assembly, the house of God, which is being formed today, is "a spiritual house" and Christ is the Corner-stone.

Moreover, this rejected Saviour, whom men despised and rejected, is not only the Sure Foundation of the building of God, and the Corner-stone into which believers from amongst the Jews and from amongst the Gentiles are fitted together, but He is also "the Head of the corner"--the crown and glory of the building! What an answer God has given to man's treatment of Him by thus exalting Christ! He has made Him everything to those who believe! The preciousness of Christ is theirs! He is the Ground of all their confidence--the "Sure Foundation"; the bond of their holy unity--the "Corner-stone"; and the grace and glory of it also--the "Head of the corner." How great is the loss of those who reject Him! How infinite is the gain of those who believe on Him! Exalted above every range of dignity in the universe, whether principalities, authorities, powers or dominions, He is Head over all things to the assembly, which He will soon call to share with Himself in the heavenly glory where He already is.

"Then with Him shall our rest be on high,

Where in holiness bright we'll sit down,

In the joy of His love ever nigh,

In the peace that His presence shall crown."

The Stone Divine

The story does not end when the assembly is glorified with her Bridegroom in heaven, for Christ is the Stone from "the hands of the mighty God of Jacob"--He is "the Stone of Israel," thus--therefore, He must return to make way for Israel's national supremacy on earth after the assembly is taken to heaven. He must come as the Stone of Divine origin--from God's hands--as the Stone "cut out without hands"--not of man's providing at all. Of this our last Scripture (Dan. 2) speaks.

But, let it be marked well, the first action of this Stone is to smite the great image (which is the symbol of the present world-system) upon its feet and break it in pieces. The interpretation is given to us in verse 42. The Stone was cut out without hands, and it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold. The great God has made known what shall come to pass hereafter: and "the interpretation thereof is sure." The book of Revelation shows us how this will be carried out in detail, and the second Psalm tells us when He takes the kingdom and the dominion and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, He will first of all dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Kings and judges of the earth are therefore urged to own fealty to Him before His wrath is kindled but a little, for, it is added, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Happy indeed are they that truly do so in view of that which hastens to come upon a Christ rejecting world.

After the Divine displeasure has been executed, and the Stone which was refused has ground to powder the godless systems of men, we are told the Stone "became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2:35). This is the symbol of Christ's glorious administration when God sets up the kingdom in His hands (v. 4), when His earthly throne shall be established in Jerusalem, the city of the great King, in connection with Israel, and the law shall go forth from Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem to the nations and peoples of the earth (Isa. 2:3). Like showers upon the mown grass His blessing will fall, "Men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed." "The whole earth shall be filled with His glory."

Our place--the assembly's place--which was formed in Him during the time of His rejection, will be in scenes of heavenly glory, though we shall share too in His reign over the earth. But, as we said, He will take us to heaven to be with Him first.

"Jesus Thou King of glory,
We soon shall dwell with Thee,
And sing Thy love's bright story,
When we Thy glory see."

Meanwhile, before that longed-for day arrives, the high and holy honour is granted to those who belong to the "spiritual house" which is built upon the "Sure Foundation" to draw near to God by Him, for the Word reminds us that we are "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." The house is for God to dwell in, and the stones that form that house are also priests, and the priesthood is to offer thanksgiving, praise and worship to God. Such spiritual sacrifices, "the fruit of the lips," are pleasing to God as we offer them to Him by His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the one Leader and High Priest of His providing. Having Him as our Foundation, the Corner-stone and glory of the building of God, and the One by whom we may boldly draw near as worshippers, we can offer with confidence and gladness our worship, for it is "acceptable to God" by Him.

"By Him our songs of praise ascend
To God whose love shall never end."

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