

# CHRIST: OUR FIRM FOUNDATION & FIXED HOPE

## 1 Peter 1:1-9

Peter wrote this letter c. 62-64 A.D. to Jewish Christians who had been scattered from Jerusalem (and possibly from Rome) to various parts of Asia Minor. He wants to encourage fellow believers who are suffering for the cause of Christ.

The central theme of this letter is one of *victory over suffering*. Believers are able to live, love, and overcome in the midst of suffering because of the hope they have in Christ. God has effectively chosen, called, and saved us, and we are able to look beyond the present suffering to the vindication and final salvation that has been prepared for us.

What Peter is stressing is that it is not merely that we are able to live in the present *full* of hope, but that we have found a *fixed* hope and a clear vision of what God will do for us in the future. Armed with this fixed hope in Christ, we believers are able to experience life on earth as those who have been *chosen* by God even though we are *castaways* by the prevailing culture.

### Peter's Concept of the Church

For Peter, the church is not something merely institutional, but very much alive and deeply personal. Christ may have been rejected by many people, but to God the Father - and to us - he is a chosen and precious cornerstone. Listen to Peter in 2:4-6:

*“As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*

In other words, the church doesn't have a cement block for its cornerstone, but a living, resurrected Lord and Savior. Moreover, as Christians, you and I are precious in the sight of God as well, for we are described as “living stones.”

The imagery is unmistakable. The church is not comprised of buildings made with human hands, rather it is living, breathing, dynamic, made with the invisible hands of God Himself. It is the very Body of Christ, comprised of those who abide in him through faith. It means that we stand or fall with Christ. If he triumphs over the grave, we triumph over the grave. If he is raised from the dead, we are to be raised from the dead. If he defeats Satan, we are to defeat Satan. If he overcomes evil, then we are both able and destined to overcome evil. In other words, as those who abide in Christ, we share in his victory and we are partakers of his destiny. Peter drives this tremendous reality home in 2:6 when he proclaims that in Scripture it says:

*“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame”* (cf. Isa. 28:16).

What a thrilling proclamation! Those who put their faith and trust in Christ are not destined for the hall of shame, but the hall of fame!

Something else is part of Peter's concept of the church. He sees that our place of true belonging is not this world. Not at all! We are non-citizen-residents of the world. We live here for now, but we are citizens of a different realm, just as a Canadian ambassador lives on foreign soil while retaining his Canadian citizenship. Watch how Peter addresses his fellow believers in verse one – "*strangers in the world!*" Then, in 2:11 he adds, "*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul .*"

## **Our Firm Foundation And Fixed Hope**

It is crucial for us to hear and understand the significance of all this in the afterglow of Easter. Think about what we have been celebrating. On Good Friday, our Lord triumphantly proclaimed from the cross these words, "*It is finished!*" What did he mean? He meant that the great work that he came to do was finished. It was accomplished. It was complete in every way. Jesus once said to the Pharisees, "*The very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me*" (Jn. 5:36). Our Lord's work of atonement is finished, accomplished - a completed masterpiece! The cross has become the hinge of human history, the focal point of the human quest for ultimate victory over the forces of evil that have so cruelly despoiled us. The cross announces that all of the failures of the past and all of our hopes for tomorrow are gathered up in one triumphant event.

"*It is finished,*" means that something is settled, decided, certain, complete and incontestable. The human project cannot fail because God has invested himself in it; the Second Person of the Trinity is truly one of us. God Himself has taken our *part* by taking our *place*. The decisive blow against Satan has been dealt. The outcome in the contest between light and darkness, love and hate, life and death, has been determined.

Then, on Resurrection Sunday, the angel's message put the capstone on the life and ministry of our Lord:

*"He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him'"*  
(Matt. 28:6-7).

Every other group having a founder who has died can go to the gravesite, read the inscription on the tombstone, and know that their founder's remains are there. Christians cannot do such a thing. How futile to stand before an empty tomb when Christ is up and about!

Why, that same day our Lord walked and talked with two disciples on the Emmaus Road. As the Master opened the Scriptures to their understanding and revealed himself to them, their hearts burned within them. Then he appeared unto the disciples, who had locked themselves behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. "*Peace be with you!*" said the Master, and as he showed himself to them, they were overjoyed.

Surely all these things are in Peter's mind and heart as he speaks to us about a "new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead?" Remember, Peter was there! No wonder he speaks to us of "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade." It is kept in Heaven for us! No wonder Peter speaks confidently about God's power; with his own eyes he beheld the One who had been dead and buried, but now stood before him – raised from the dead!

For Peter, suddenly all the trials and tribulations of life are merely a prelude to the return of the risen Savior. They are a useful prelude, because they strengthen us, refine us, and purify us we serve the Lord and anticipate his glorious appearance at the end of this age. In verse nine, Peter shows us why we can be filled with an inexpressible joy – even in the midst of tribulation – *“for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls .”*

We need to understand that suffering flows from salvation. Suffering, when properly understood, is to be seen as the wake following behind salvation’s boat. Paul stated that:

*“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted ?”* (2 Tim. 3:12).

Peter reminds us to look beyond the suffering and persecution and remember that we are receiving the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls. True faith, the kind of faith that actually takes hold of Christ by cultivating a relationship with the Master, inevitably deepens into love and inexpressible joy – even in the midst of hardship. The *current response* of the true believer is that they love Jesus in spite of not having seen him. They do “see” him with the eyes of their understanding, and their intimate knowledge of God and His ways brings them inexpressible joy. The further knowledge that it is our destiny to be completely conformed to Christ only serves to heighten our joy.

You see, then, why I have chosen this passage in the afterglow of Easter. Because of the cross and resurrection of Christ, we have two things that are unshakable: a sure foundation and a fixed hope!

Is there any other foundation that can be laid other than that which has already been laid in Christ (1 Cor. 3:11)? No! Every other foundation is shifting sand! But Christ is our Rock!

Is there any other hope other than the hope fuelled by the promise of our Lord’s return? None whatsoever! We have a fixed hope because the Author of our hope was dead but has been resurrected, and death can touch him no more.

Let us build together on that sure foundation! Let us hope together in the One who says, *“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!”* (Rev. 1:17-18).