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The Testimony of Our Hope



QUESTION 1:

When have you bought something based on a friend's recommendation?

THE POINT

Our hope in Christ
points others to Him.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

“If God loved me, He would not have treated me this way.” Charlotte Elliott often said this because poor health had rendered her disabled.

When Dr. Cesar Malan, a Swiss minister, visited her family home in 1922, he spoke with Charlotte about her condition. The minister’s genuine concern for her, coupled with his own confident faith, led to a breakthrough. He told her the cure for her misery was the very faith she despised. He said, “Give yourself to God just as you are now, with your fightings and fears, hates and loves, pride and shame.”

Charlotte turned to God and experienced new life in Christ that day. As she grew in her walk with the Lord, she studied His Word and began to write hymns, the most famous of which detailed that pivotal day in her life:

“Just as I am without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed
for me, And that Thou bidst
me come to Thee, O Lamb of
God, I come, I come!”¹

Dr. Melan’s hope pointed Charlotte to a Living Hope, and our hope can point others to Christ too. A life lived in Christ is a great “recommendation” to others to come to Him.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 PETER 2:4-6

⁴ As you come to him, a living stone—rejected by people but chosen and honored by God—⁵ you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in Scripture: See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and honored cornerstone, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.

Our salvation was secured once and for all in Christ, so Peter's phrase "as you come to him" (v. 4) is not a reference to the initial salvation decision; rather, it is a picture of the children of God constantly drawing near to Him. Under the Old Testament sacrificial system, only priests had the privilege of coming into God's presence to offer sacrifices, but under the New Covenant, all believers can enter into that place.

QUESTION 2:

How can we live unashamed in today's culture?

Believers are also being built into a spiritual house. In the Old Testament, the temple and specifically the holy of holies was the dwelling place of God among His people, but now, we are that dwelling!

- ▶ "So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).
- ▶ "For we are God's coworkers. You are God's field, God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9).

God's people called out to Him as their rock and salvation. Now Jesus was identified as the chief cornerstone of this spiritual house. Jesus is the foundation of the church who provides its stability, security, and strength.

The cornerstone was crucial to a building's overall structure. It was the main foundation stone in ancient buildings and tied everything together as the place where walls would meet, or it served as the keystone in the center of an arch. In both cases, the cornerstone was the stabilizing stone in

the structure. The body of Christ is not held together by preferences, creeds, politics, tradition, culture, a constitution and bylaws, or denominational ties; it's held together by the chief cornerstone that is Jesus Christ. There is stability because Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His church holds an unchanging message in changing times.

Because the foundation is rock solid, believers will never be disappointed or put to shame. We have no regret or remorse after making the decision to follow Christ.

1 PETER 2:7-10

⁷ So honor will come to you who believe; but for the unbelieving, The stone that the builders rejected—this one has become the cornerstone, ⁸ and A stone to stumble over, and a rock to trip over. They stumble because they disobey the word; they were destined for this. ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

In ancient Jerusalem, Herod built the tower of Antonia as the headquarters of the Roman government. Under Herod's orders, quarrymen cut stones from the bedrock of Mount Moriah to build the fortress as well as the temple, the temple platform, and the colonnade on the temple mount. Antonia's Fortress stood on the northern end of the temple courtyard and spread across four large towers. Jesus was in one of these towers

when Pilate brought Him before the people as they shouted for the release of Barabbas.

Down below this tower, a massive hewn stone sits where the walkway ended. It's very likely that Jews during Jesus' day would have known about this rock as one rejected by the stone masons who worked diligently under Herod's oversight. The stone had been chiseled in places, but for some reason the builders rejected it and cast it aside.

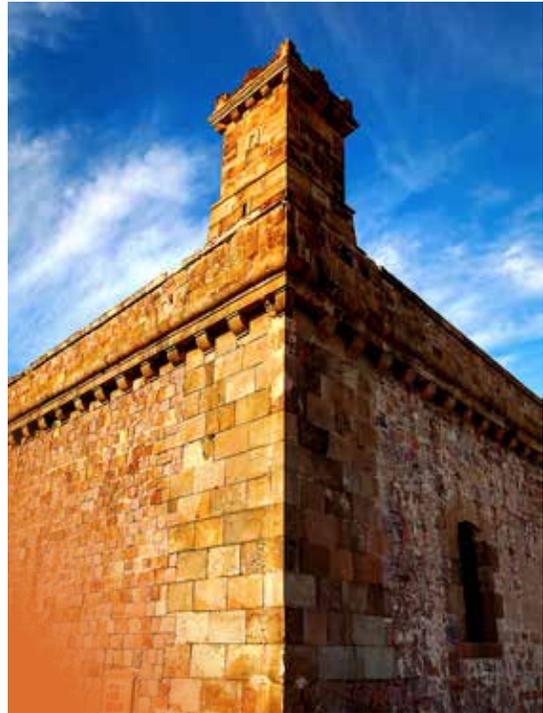
QUESTION 3:

How do people stumble over Jesus today?

I picture Jesus Himself standing somewhere in the vicinity of this rock when He quoted Psalm 118:22-23: “Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is what the Lord has done and it is wonderful in our eyes?” (Matt. 21:42). Just days later, He would be rejected by His own people and condemned to death in the Antonia Fortress right above this rock.

Others may reject Christ, but believers stand confidently because of who we are in Him. In verse 9, Peter gave some descriptions of God’s people who have found refuge in Christ:

- ▶ **A Chosen Race.** God chose Israel not on the basis of their size or merit, but out of His great love. He also has chosen us because of His great grace and love.
- ▶ **A Royal Priesthood.** This unparalleled description is unique to believers. In the Old Testament, the tribe of Levi was the priestly line, and the tribe of Judah was the royal line, and those lines never crossed. However, we who are in Christ are of a completely new line: we are people of the new covenant who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, who is both our High Priest and King of kings.



- ▶ **A Holy Nation.** As we saw in the previous session, we are called to holiness because God is holy.
- ▶ **A People for His Possession.** We have a personal relationship with Christ. We can know Him, and He knows us completely. No one can sever the union we share as His own people.



1 PETER 2:11-15

¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. ¹² Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits. ¹³ Submit to every human authority because of the Lord, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority ¹⁴ or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good. ¹⁵ For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good.

Our walk must match our talk. These verses deal with our behavior in a world where the environment may not be so comfortable for Christians. If we claim to be Christ-followers, then we must live His life before this world.

QUESTION 4:

What do these verses teach us about how we follow Christ together?

Christians should be the very best neighbors, citizens, bosses, employees, friends, and coworkers. We are to represent Christ in everything we do—from paying our bills to playing sports to raising our kids. Peter noted three ways we can exemplify Christ.

1. Abstain from sinful desires. We bear personal responsibility for our actions; therefore, we should remove ourselves from certain influences and situations. Our good works and godly living will serve to point others to the One who has saved us.

2. Submit to authority. Peter did not back down on his instruction about submitting to human authority, even though many of the believers he wrote to were facing intense persecution at the hands of those in authority. A governmental system may be corrupt, but God has ordained the institution of government itself for the good of its citizens.

3. Do good. People often question what God's will is for their life, yet it's spelled out here in black and white: do good.

God has linked His reputation in this world to our behavior. The unchurched may not read the Bible, but they do “read” you and me. We give a face to faith, a credible witness to a cynical world.

QUESTION 5:

What are some ways we can express our hope to those who need to hear it?

PROCLAIM HIS PRAISE

Consider how this passage describes believers. Draw a line between each descriptor and the corresponding way God has enabled us to proclaim His praise:

A chosen race

Received God's mercy

A royal priesthood

Called out of darkness into God's light

A holy nation

Made into God's people

A people for His possession

Offer spiritual sacrifices

Explain how you might proclaim your hope in Christ this week:

“Believers are living stones in His building. Each time someone trusts Christ, another stone is quarried out of the pit of sin and cemented by grace into the building.”

WARREN WIERSBE

