

SOLID ROCK – THEOLOGY

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[67] So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” [68] Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, [69] and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” ~ John 6:67-69

The words of Peter here echo both a desperation and an absolute hope: desperation in that there is nowhere else to turn, but hope in that the one to whom they are turning is a sure foundation and trustworthy. Peter is here expressing the heart of faith in the Son of God. Even without a full knowledge of all that would come—both the suffering and death of Jesus, and Peter’s ultimate suffering and death in obedience to his King—Peter makes a confession of desperate faith.

The hymn “On Christ the Solid Rock” is in many ways a confession of faith for the people of God. Originally written in 1832, these words reflect the same faith of Peter from the other side of the cross. The chorus of this song is a repetition of Jesus’ conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount:

[24] “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. [26] And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. [27] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” ~Matthew 7:24-27

Fundamental to the people of God is the absolute centrality of Jesus. We have no hope apart from His perfect life for us, His atoning death in our place, and the power of His resurrection assuring our reconciliation with God if we have faith in Jesus. This song from beginning to end is a powerful, succinct reminder of that truth, and the proclamation of God’s chosen people throughout redemptive history. There is also a pattern in the song of looking back upon Christ’s justifying work for us in the past, understanding how that work sanctifies and keeps us today, and how that work provides and great hope for the future glorification of God’s saints when He returns. This song so clearly articulates the nature of salvation that it is hard to imagine a more theologically rich song for the people of God to sing in corporate worship.

The **first verse** focuses us on the heart of Christ’s work for us – redemption and imputed righteousness. The blood of Christ has ransomed us from the debt and penalty of sin, atoning for and washing our iniquity clean. The song, however, also reminds of the glorious truth of Christ’s imputed righteousness. We are not only a forgiven people, but we are a perfectly righteous people because of Christ’s perfect record of obedience to the Father. Through union with Christ, imputed righteousness secures for us all the benefits of being a son or daughter of God and an heir to His glorious riches. We are a richly blessed people indeed!

Ephesians 1:3-14 summarizes this great reality for us well:

[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, [4] even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love [5] he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. [7] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, [8] which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight [9] making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ [10] as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

11] In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, [12] so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. [13] In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
~Ephesians 1:3-14

Through the gospel, we are a people who inherit all the blessings of Christ!

The centrality of these truths is not simply reflected upon, however, it is actually applied into the situations of our lives now. The **second and third verses** reflect on the truth that even in the midst of suffering and trial, Christ's work provides a firm foundation and an anchor that holds us fast. No matter the circumstance, the people of God can always look back to the historical work of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection, and find hope when circumstances seem hopeless. The song provides a strong theological and practical mooring for the believer in the midst of suffering to endure and persevere. There is an even a hint of what Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 at the end of the third verse:

[9] But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. [10] For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. ~2 Corinthians 12:9-10

For those who trust in Christ, there is joy found in weakness and opportunity to trust even more fully in Christ when our souls "are giving way".

Even then the song is not done plumbing the depths of Christ's work, and moves to the future hope we have of the return of our King in the **fourth verse**. We are reminded again that our future eternity with the Father does not rest upon our feeble attempts at pleasing Him, but through faith and union with Christ we are fully clothed in His righteousness and have nothing to fear in the time of judgment.

The **chorus** can be sung simply, with such passion, because of the great depth and breadth of Christ's work for us. If indeed all of these things are true, how can we respond in any other way but to say "on Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand". The comprehensive work of Christ is the only sure foundation that covers our past, sustains us in the present, and guarantees our future.

So with sureness and boldness the people of God can proclaim that all strength, hope, peace, and life are foundationally rooted only in the person of Jesus Christ. What a marvelous Savior we have!