

Series: Faith Under Fire
“Walking in Confidence”

1 Peter 2:4-10

Today we continue in a sermon series called “Faith Under Fire.” Every person here today understands that we live in an imperfect world. We see this in many ways, but one of the clearest ways that we quickly observe this is through the trials that we face in this world. **James 1:2** commands, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, **when** you encounter various trials.” This verse clearly teaches us that trials will come into every one of our lives. The trials may be different and multi-faceted, yet we can be assured that we will all face them. We see this all throughout our world today. At any moment it seems that half of us are going through a trial and the other half is awaiting the next trial. Trials are a part of life for all people.

The question that we will answer is simply this, “What am I to do when my faith is under fire?” Other similar questions are: What am I to do when I am going through trials and difficulties? What am I to do when my faith is tested? What am I to do when it feels like my world is falling apart?

Over the past three weeks we’ve learned three keys to living when our faith is under fire. First, as Christians we have the opportunity and the calling to **walk in hope**. As a child of God, no matter what I face in this world it can’t diminish or take away what God has done for me, is doing in me and will fulfill through me in the future. Because of God’s grace and mercy, I have complete confidence that heaven is my home. This confidence gives me living hope as I live in this fallen world today. So, the first key is that we must walk in hope. Second, we discovered that we must **walk in holiness**. Remember the believers of Peter’s day were going through intense persecution at the hands of Nero. Many were wondering how they were to live in a foreign land and how they were to live amidst such a difficult situation. Peter directed them to live in holiness. Peter clearly wanted them to know that their focus wasn’t to be on where they might reside. Instead they should focus on Who they had a relationship with. It didn’t matter where they lived or what they left behind. What mattered most was that God loved them, was with them, and He was calling them to holiness. Last week we saw the third key that we are to **walk in harmony** with the Lord and with others. Because we have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus and have been adopted into His family, we must continually love the Lord and other believers. Both our love for the Lord and for others is greatly tested in times of trial. Today we look at a fourth key for how we are to live when our faith is under fire.

Read Text

Walking in confidence may sound like a strange statement about facing trials. Many people in our day are encouraged to portray confidence. An athlete is encouraged to act a certain way so that they exude confidence in their skill. A student getting ready to go on a date wants to portray that they are confident in who they are. An ambitious individual will go to a job interview and will strive to display the confidence that they have the abilities necessary for the job and that they are the best fit. We have all been encouraged to be confident. However, when I refer to walking in

confidence, I am not referring to confidence in ourselves, our looks, skills, abilities, smarts, etc. I am referring to the confidence that we have in the Lord. Paul described believers in Philippians 3:3 as those “who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put **no confidence in the flesh.**” However, he still lived with confidence because His confidence was in the Lord. In **Philippians 1:6** Paul said, “For I am **confident** of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” He was confident of God’s working in their lives even when they didn’t feel it. David said something similar in **Psalms 27:1-3**, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread? When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell. Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear; Though war arise against me, In spite of this I shall be **confident.**” David knew that the Lord was his help and his defense, therefore he could stand confident regardless of what came against him. It is this same confidence that we see from the writer of Hebrews in **Hebrews 13:5b-6**, “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,’ so that we **confidently** say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?’ ” We should put no confidence in our flesh, however, we must have confidence in the Lord.

Remember that Peter was writing to a body of people who were greatly burdened and hurting. They were experiencing intense persecution for their faith. They are going through great storms and trials. Such fiery circumstances would cause them to have many questions and to experience many doubts and fears. But God speaks through Peter to remind them, and us today, that we don’t have to walk through our trials with doubt, defeat or discouragement. We can walk through our trials with confidence, knowing certain truths that are unshakeable. When I may be shaking in fear I can find rest and assurance in He who is unshaken. And when I look to Him and trust in Him I find that I can walk in confidence. What gives us this confidence?

I. The Position of Christ (vs. 4-8)

The text says that Jesus is a living stone. The word “living” refers to “life” that comes only from Jesus. The statement seems odd in some ways because of the contrast. Stones are not alive. They may be large or heavy and they endure over long periods of time, but they aren’t living things. However, Jesus is alive and He is described here as a living stone. His purpose was more significant than anyone else in all the world or through all the ages. He is the living stone because He arose from the dead with power and in all victory.

A. The Stone Revealed (vs. 4, 6-7)

Notice clearly how Jesus Christ, this living stone, is described. He is called the **CHOSEN STONE** of the Father. Before the foundation of the world God had a divine plan for sending God the Son into this world. Many men try to find their own way to God. Many men try to choose their own life plans and patterns. But, there is only one way that pleases God and that is through His chosen way – Jesus. He is also also called the **PRECIOUS STONE**. This speaks of His immense value. The world would reject Him, but God the Father saw the true worth of the Lord Jesus. There is nobody and nothing else that could

bring peace, joy, and salvation to man. These things are available only through Christ because He is the living stone that was chosen by God the Father and is precious to Him.

Next, we see another key truth about the stone revealed. We see that Jesus is also the **Cornerstone**. God the Father has established the fact that Jesus and Jesus alone is the cornerstone and nobody can change that regardless of how hard they might try. The cornerstone was the major structural part of ancient buildings. It was literally the first and most important stone that was established. It had to be strong enough to support what was built upon it, and it had to be precisely laid, because every other part of the structure was oriented to it. The cornerstone was the support and the unifier of the entire building. Everything would be leveled and plumbed according to the cornerstone. That is what Jesus Christ is to God's building, the Church. The whole building is united together because of the cornerstone. In other words, it was the cornerstone that was first laid to hold together the foundation and the building. Warren Wiersbe said it simply, "There is only one Savior, Christ Jesus, and only one spiritual building, the Church. Jesus is the chief corner stone of the church, binding the building together." Paul's letters confirm this truth. **Ephesians 2:19-20**, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone." **1 Cor. 3:10-11**, "According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

B. The Stone Rejected (vs. 7-8)

Yes, Jesus is the Living Corner Stone that has been chosen by God the Father, but the reality is that not all people received Him then or now. Some rejected and discarded Him and many continue to do so today. The word "reject" here means "to reject as the result of disapproval." This is exactly what the Jewish leaders had done with the Lord. They disapproved of Him. They didn't like Him, didn't agree with Him, and didn't want Him. They were happy in their man-centered religion, so they certainly didn't see the need for a Savior. They disapproved of Him because He was a friend of publicans and sinners. They disapproved of Him because He refused to bow to their Sabbath traditions. They rejected Him because the common people heard Him gladly. They despised Him because of His miracles, especially the raising of Lazarus. They disapproved of Him because He exposed their hypocrisy. They rejected Him because He was not the kind of Messiah they wanted. So strong was their rejection that they weren't content to simply reject, they determined to have Him crucified. In their hardened hearts, they rejected the Only One who could save them. They completely and utterly rejected Him because of the hardness of their hearts. What is the summary? For them, Jesus was a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. It means that they stumbled over Him. They were so caught up in their own works and laws that they failed to acknowledge the truth of Christ. They couldn't see beyond where they were, so they stumbled over Him and refused to accept Him as Savior. But notice the reason. **Verse 8** says, "For they stumble because they are disobedient to the Word, and to

this doom they were also appointed.” The real reason for their rejection is that they refused to accept and submit to God’s Word. They trusted their own ideals and opinions more than the living Word of God. God’s Word called them to admit their sin and repent, but like so many still today they loved their own darkness rather than light. Sadly, today, many still stumble over Christ and refuse to accept Him. **1 Corinthians 1:18-23** explains how many view Christ and His cross. Friend, I beg you, don’t reject Jesus. 1 Peter 2:8 says that those who do are certainly doomed. You are hearing the Word of God preached today. Don’t take lightly the opportunity put before you.

C. The Stone Received (vs. 4-5, 7)

In **Matthew 16:18**, Jesus says that He will build His church and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. How does He build His church? One stone at a time. Not only is Jesus the Living Stone, but for all who believe in Him, we each become a living stone in His building. I love how Wiersbe explains it. “Each time someone trusts Christ for salvation, another stone is quarried out of the pit of sin and cemented by grace into His building.” That means that in January of 1987 God reached down to an old ugly stone called Matthew that was stuck in sin and decay and pulled that stone out and cleansed him and placed him into His spiritual building called the Church. And today He is still adding to His church stone upon stone, soul upon soul, person upon person.

The Scripture says that “you are being built.” It implies a work that is in progress. This progress is two-fold. It refers to the adding of brick upon brick upon brick to this spiritual building. But it also refers to the molding and shaping that He does in our lives so that each stone is shaped, as He desires, so that we fit perfectly in His building as He sees fit. Jesus takes every part, every stone, and knocks off the rough edges, chiseling a piece here, sanding a piece there, smoothing it out, getting it ready, building it in, fitting it into place in His building as He cuts it precisely to fit beautifully with every other part. This work is still being done today. We are a work in progress, as is His church, but one day we will be presented to Him as a complete, beautiful, majestic creation.

Can you envision the amazing unity of this heavenly building? Peter wrote this letter to believers who were scattered all over the place because of the intense persecution, yet he said that they all belonged to one “spiritual house.” In the picture of a building, there’s no separation of stones that make up the wall. Everything is closely joined and knit together. Jesus draws us together in a way that nothing else can. ****ILL:** As you look around you at this physical building, not so very long ago, it was nothing but a bunch of scattered pieces. There were some 2x4s, metal studs, a pile of screws, electrical wiring, drywall boards, cans of paint, etc. Now all these pieces have come together for a beautiful facility. The same thing is true of God’s building, the Church. Those of us who are now Christians were once stuck in our sin. We had nothing in common except for the fact that we were spiritually dead. But Jesus Christ, the master architect and master builder, has taken us and put us together, joined us together in His Church. **We belong to each other because we belong to Christ.**

When our faith is under fire we can walk in confidence because of the position of Christ and our connection to Him. This leads us to the second key to walking in confidence.

II. The Privilege of the Believer (vs. 7, 9a)

There is one simply but major difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. The difference between the person headed for heaven and the person headed for hell is found in one word – “BELIEVE”. Peter draws the contrast clearly in **verse 7**, “This precious value, then, is for you who BELIEVE.” He goes on in **verse 7b, 8b**, “But for those who DISBELIEVE...they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.” Friends, I urge you, if you have not yet believed in Jesus, do so today. Settle this matter today. Don’t put it off. God promises in **verse 6b**, “He who believes in Him will not be disappointed.” Again, we can have confidence as we walk through this fallen world, even when our faith is under fire, because we are trusting in the promises of God and in the finished work of Christ. In verse 9, God refers to believers in four different ways:

A. You are a chosen race

To the Christians of his day, and to us, Peter says, you are a “chosen race.” This was a great encouragement. They likely felt like a forgotten or neglected group, but God wanted them to know that He divinely and sovereignly chose them. Just as Jesus is described as the chosen cornerstone, all believers are described as a chosen race. All who belong to God by faith in Christ are a special people, chosen by God. This is a hotly debated topic in many Christian circles today. Yes, we must believe in the Lord and surrender to Him, but the Bible clearly states that God sovereignly chose us. We don’t have to fully understand this to grasp the significance of it. We can accept that this is all a marvelous act of God’s grace. For example, consider how He chose Israel to be His chosen people. **Deuteronomy 7:7-8** says, “The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all the peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” God chose them purely because of His love and mercy and does the same with us. Many have this notion that salvation is about us, as if God must have been inspired by us so He responded to our greatness. But, I want to remind you that He first chose us out of love and amazing grace. We don’t deserve His grace and mercy. We’ve done nothing to earn it. **1 John 4:19** says, “We love, because He first loved us.” We should recognize the amazing privilege it is to be a part of His family. We are a chosen race. Jesus Himself said in **John 15:16**, “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

B. You are a royal priesthood

This would have also been a great encouragement to them. They would have likely felt like a poor beggar, but God wanted them to know how He viewed them. They were a royal priesthood. In the Old Testament period, God’s people **had** a priesthood. God had set aside

the tribe of Levi and the household of Aaron to serve as priests. These priests had special responsibilities and rights related to the sacrifices that were offered to God. It is amazing to study the Old Testament and realize that not even kings and famous saints could enjoy these priestly privileges. David, the man after God's own heart, couldn't be a priest. Daniel, as bold and godly as he was, couldn't be a priest. Solomon, with all his wisdom, still couldn't serve as priest. They simply didn't meet God's requirement of the priesthood. However, today, because of what Jesus did at Calvary, God's people **are** a priesthood. This means that every single believer has the privilege of coming into the presence of God. **Heb. 10:19-22**, "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." In the OT there was the veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies. This barrier could only be crossed by the high priest who would go in once a year, on the Day of Atonement, to make sacrifice for the sins of the people of God. Through Jesus, though, God has made a new and living way to Him and it is for all people. The Bible is speaking of the Priesthood of Believers. The Bible teaches that when Jesus Christ died the veil of the OT was torn from top to bottom. It means that the barrier that separated God from man has been torn and done away with. Jesus opened the way for all mankind to come to God. No wonder Jesus declared, "I am the WAY, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me," **John 14:6**. We don't come to God through any person on earth, but only through the One Mediator, Jesus Christ. **1 Timothy 2:5-6a**, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all." God has given every believer the privilege to come into His presence. This is an amazing truth. Not even David, Solomon, or Daniel could enjoy the priestly rites and responsibilities. But today, through salvation we are a royal priesthood.

C. You are a holy nation

Again, what an encouragement this was. They likely felt like a degraded, defiled, demeaned people by those who were against them. But God declared them a holy nation. We have already seen this point in this letter. **1 Peter 1:15-16**, "Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'." To be holy means that you are set apart by God and for God. You are consecrated to Him and belong exclusively to Him. Because of this we should obey God's Word and seek to please Him in all that we do.

D. You are a people for God's own possession

The Greek word used here literally means "to form or to make around." The significance is that **God's people are formed around Him** and not around the world. It means that Christians are individuals who are possessed by God. **Ephesians 2:1-3, 11-19** describes it clearly. We once were not the people of God, but because of the work of Christ, we have been forgiven and cleansed, and now we belong to Him. It means also that we are of value

because we belong to Him. *****ILL:** Basketball with Michael Jordan. Baseball in Nolan Ryan's hand. Football in Derrick Henry's hand.*** We are of great value not because of our amazing abilities but because God so loved us that He made us His own possession. Friend, never forget that God loves you and has a plan for your life. You are His valuable possession. Satan would have you to believe that you are of no value and of no benefit to the Lord, His Church or to anyone. Satan will lie to you and lie about you. He will attack you, deceive, demean you and do all that he can to destroy you. You may feel hindered by your past, your age, your defeats, your inabilities, etc., but God loves you and you are His peculiar treasure. You are valuable. You are possessed by God. Even when He knew what it would cost Him to possess You, He willingly gave His all. What a privilege it is to know that we are His people, that He has made us His children and declared us to be joint-heirs with Christ.

We have confidence because of the position of Christ and our connection to Him. We have confidence because of the privileges that we share through Him. Then there is a third key.

III. The Priority of the Believer (vs. 5b, 9b)

Some may question how the believer's priorities affect their confidence, but it is really simple. In this passage, God lays out several things that believers should do. Please understand that we don't do these things to try to earn God's favor. We have already stated that there is no work that can be done to earn God's favor. We must simply believe in Christ and the work that He has already accomplished. However, once I have believed then my conduct and priorities will change. As we live out these priorities we experience His presence at work in us and through us which gives us amazing confidence as we walk through trials. Many don't have the assurance of their salvation because they are living in sin or are cold in their relationship with Christ. In a similar manner, many believers don't live in confidence because they aren't trusting God and obeying what He has called them to do. Once they start living in obedience they begin to see how God is working in them and through them and allowing them to partner in His great plans in the world. What should be our priorities?

A. Present spiritual sacrifices to God (vs. 5b)

We've already seen it in the passage. At salvation, God places us together and builds us up into a "spiritual house for a holy priesthood." What did the priests in the Old Testament do? They offered sacrifices to God. Today we don't have to offer literal blood sacrifices because Jesus came as our high priest who gave Himself for us. Because of His work we are a royal priesthood. But, notice clearly the purpose of this priesthood is "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." There are at least four specific things listed as "spiritual sacrifices" in the New Testament:

- 1. Present your body- Romans 12:1,** "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." This means that we must surrender our bodies to Him to be used for His glory.

2. **Present your Praise - Hebrews 13:15**, “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.” With our lips, our mouth, our voice we should give God praise and thanks. We should never be ashamed or hesitate to give Him praise.
3. **Present your Service - Hebrews 13:16**, “And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” When we seek to do good by serving others and sharing with them it clearly pleases the Lord.
4. **Present your Giving - Philippians 4:18**, as Paul thanked the Philippians believers for their generosity, he said, “I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.” When we give willingly, cheerfully, and sacrificially for the glory of God and the good of others it is like a sweet aroma to the Lord.

B. Proclaim His Name to those in darkness (vs. 9b)

The purpose of all that has been said is to publish the virtues of the One who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. When I think about all that God has done for me it makes me want to sing and shout, but it also makes me want to tell others about it. If you have truly experienced the gift of salvation, then it will not be possible for you to keep silent about it. ****ILL:** Going to Home Depot, gentleman started talking about what the Lord had done in his life. Every time I went in there after that he wanted to talk. He couldn't keep it silent.

The word “proclaim” means “to tell out” or to “proclaim abroad.” From the Greek it means “to advertise His praises.” It is our calling and our privilege to advertise and proclaim the praises of God. In other words, declaring the goodness of God shouldn't have to be a program. It should be the day to day pattern and priority of our lives. Brothers and sisters, we live in a dark and lost world, but we are no longer living in the darkness. We have been set free and are now walking in the light. People do not naturally know the truth and the excellencies of God. However, they should be hearing them from our mouths and seeing them displayed through our lives. We must proclaim His name and as we do we will find that He is still at work in the lives of people. What confidence He gives when we see Him moving people from darkness to light.

****ILL: Closing Illustration:** Village chief waiting to see how the white men responded to the word of the missionary before deciding to respond. Such is the case with the world around us. They are watching to see Christ at work in you and me. Let's be sure that we are focused on our position in Christ, our privilege through Him, and obedient to the priorities that He has called us to.