

A Study in the Book of Romans

24

Romans 9:15-33

Key Verses

‘ What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the ‘stumbling stone’.

Before we continue in our study of **Romans 9**, let’s review quickly what we have discovered so far.

- The three chapters of **Romans 9-11** must be understood in the light of two important facts – **faith** (which Paul has established is the basis of God’s salvation) and **Israel’s purpose as a nation**.
- Paul is expressing **great anguish of heart** over Israel’s rejection of the Gospel, not because he is angry with them, but because he loves them.
- Although Israel had received many blessings from God that should have acted as stepping stones into the Gospel these turned out to be **stumbling blocks to the Gospel**, for Israel continued to rely upon the Old Covenant in order to gain righteousness with God.
- Paul has shown that God’s Word to Israel had not failed, because those who were the **“true Israel”** (those within Israel who were of the spiritual line of Abraham’s faith) **had in fact responded to the message of the Gospel**.

Introduction

The Gospel’s Three Revelations

The Gospel’s Three Answers

▶ **The Gospel’s Answer to Israel** ◀

The Gospel in Action

Conclusion

- Paul has used **the example of Jacob and Esau** to show that God's election (for his purpose) is based not on personal merit or works, but upon his divine choice.
- Paul has quoted from **Exodus 33:19**: ““I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy...” He has shown that **man has no rights to God's mercy**, that **God has the right to dispense with mercy as he sees fit**, and that, as we have seen in the first eight chapters of **Exodus**, **God has chosen to show mercy to those who have faith in Jesus Christ**.

As we move on to the second half of **Romans 9**, let's take one more look at **Romans 9:15-16**, this time through the filter of various Bible versions:

New King James Version: “For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”

New International Version: “For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.”

International Standard Version: “For he says to Moses, ‘I will be merciful to the person I want to be merciful to, and I will be kind to the person I want to be kind to.’ Therefore, God's choice does not depend on a person's will or effort, but on God himself, who shows mercy.”

New Century Version: “God said to Moses, ‘I will show kindness to anyone to whom I want to show kindness, and I will show mercy to anyone to whom I want to show mercy.’ So God will choose the one to whom he decides to show mercy; his choice does not depend on what people want or try to do.”

New Revised Standard Version: “For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy.”

New Living Translation: “For God said to Moses, ‘I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose.’ So receiving God's promise is not up to us. We can't get it by choosing it or working hard for it. God will show mercy to anyone he chooses.”

The New Testament in Modern English: “For God said long ago to Moses: ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ It is obviously not a question of human will or human effort, but of divine mercy.”

The Message: “God told Moses, ‘I'm in charge of mercy. I'm in charge of compassion.’ Compassion doesn't originate in our bleeding hearts or moral sweat, but in God's mercy.”

The Amplified Bible: “For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion (pity) on whom I will have compassion...So then [God’s gift] is not a question of human will and human effort, but of God’s mercy – It depends not on one’s own willingness nor on his strenuous exertion as in running a race, but on God’s having mercy on him.”

Having used Jacob as a *positive* example of God’s sovereign election, Paul now uses another familiar figure in Israel’s history as a *negative* example of God’s sovereign election.

The Example of Pharaoh

Read Romans 9:17-18

As further proof that God’s mercy does not depend on the effort or will of man, Paul uses Pharaoh as an example:

An example of God’s mercy

As extraordinary as it may seem, God’s mercy was even at work in his dealings with Pharaoh (**Exodus 3:19-14:31**). At first glance it might appear that Paul is saying that God raised Pharaoh up for destruction.

But when the Lord says to Pharaoh, “I raised you up for this very purpose,” he is not saying, “I *gave you life* for this very purpose” (in other words, that he made Pharaoh to be what he was, so that he could use him). God did not create Pharaoh in sin and rebellion, and most certainly did not create him for eternal judgment. God could never create any person either to be wicked or to be eternally damned. This would be totally against his character. He cannot do anything that contradicts his own nature. He cannot be responsible for any act which is unjust and which breaks his own laws. As Paul says in **9:14** (KJV):

“Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.”

On the contrary, the Hebrew word used in **Exodus** and translated as “raise” is the word *amad*, which literally means “to cause to stand still, to preserve or to continue.” And this is exactly what the context in **Exodus** implies. **Romans 9:17** is referring, not to God giving Pharaoh life or even to raising him up to be king, but rather to his patience in preserving him alive *in spite* of his disobedience and deserving of judgment! It is actually a demonstration of God’s mercy and forbearance! As we see in the context of **Exodus 9:15-16**:

“For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. But I have raised you up (“caused you to continue”) for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

The Lord did not judge Pharaoh immediately – as he deserved – but let him continue to live as king for two reasons:

- **For Pharaoh's sake** – "...that I might show you my power..." God was long-suffering with Pharaoh so as to give him every opportunity to repent. For, as Paul pointed out earlier (**2:4**), the kindness, tolerance and patience of God with wicked men is to give them time and opportunity to turn to him. Peter also makes this clear in **2 Peter 3:9**: "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." This was the same patience that was being expressed even to Pharaoh, despite the fact that his wickedness deserved swift judgment from God.
- **For the world's sake** – "...that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Even though Pharaoh stubbornly rejected the opportunity God gave him, he could not thwart God's plan. For God will even use rebellious man to fulfill his purposes! It is not his will that they should be rebellious – but if they are, their rebellion still cannot stop his plans. Instead, he will use it for his ultimate glory. For example, suppose the eldest son of a father was continually rebellious and, despite his dad's loving warnings, finally ended up in serious trouble. That father, though broken-hearted about his older son, will use him as an object-lesson to teach his younger son so that he will not fall into the same trap. In the same way, Pharaoh, through his own stubbornness and rebellion, became an object-lesson for the whole world. God allowed him to continue as king and used him as a demonstration of his power and glory to the world – because his desire was that the whole earth might hear, believe and turn to him. As the Lord told Moses in **Exodus 7:5**: "And the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it" (see also **Joshua 2:9-11**).

Thus we see that God's interaction with Moses during the exodus involved mercy being expressed:

- Firstly in a limited expression to Pharaoh himself (in delaying the coming judgment and allowing him opportunity to repent)
- Secondly, to Israel (in rescuing them from slavery in Egypt)
- And ultimately, to the whole world (in showing his nature as both a sovereign and merciful God, giving the world an opportunity to learn of him – note **1 Samuel 6:1-6**).

This meaning is also brought out by the *NIV Bible Commentary*:

"I raised you up' does not refer to Pharaoh's emergence in history, but to God's providence in sparing him up to that time. Pharaoh deserved death for his oppression and insolence, but his life would not be taken during the series of plagues, so that the full extent of his hardness of heart might be evident and the glory of God in the deliverance of his people enhanced...The fame of this Pharaoh actually depended on the mercy of God in sparing him. God can be glorified through both those who oppose him...and through those who trust and serve him."¹

An example of God's sovereignty

Not only, says Paul, does God have “mercy on whom he wants to have mercy,” but he also “hardens whom he wants to harden,” and in this, Pharaoh was an example of God’s sovereignty. The Scripture clearly reveals two things about the scope of God’s mercy:

- God wants to show mercy to *all* (**Romans 11:32; 2 Peter 3:9**).
- God, however, will *only* show mercy to those who respond in faith to the Gospel (**1 John 1:12-13**).

And Scripture also clearly reveals whom it is that God hardens – those who, in the face of continual conviction and calling of the Holy Spirit, persistently harden their own hearts (**Matthew 22:1-14**).

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

People experience the “sternness of God” (**Romans 11:22**), says Paul, “because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” He then goes on to say:

“For *this reason* God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”

Do you notice the order of God’s “hardening”? He hardens those who have *already* hardened their own hearts against him. He sends “a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie” because they have *already* “not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.” Even before God sends them the “powerful delusion” they had *already* “exchanged the truth of God for a lie” (**Romans 1:25**).

We see this same principle in **Romans 1:24**, where Paul writes:

“Therefore God *gave them over* in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.”

Mankind had given *themselves* over to sin. Now God responds and, in his sovereign action, gives *them* over to their sin. Likewise, we find, in **1:26**:

“*Because of this*, God gave them over to shameful lusts...”

Because of what? Because “[t]hey exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator” (**1:25**). In response to *this*, Paul says, “God gave them over” to the hardness of their heart.

In **1:28**, Paul goes on to describe God’s sovereign hardening of the human heart:

“Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he *gave them over* to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.”

Why did God give them over to a depraved mind? Because “they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God.” This is the basic principle of the

hardening of God (**Ephesians 4:18; Hebrews 3:13**). Let's now spell it out clearly:

- God had already said to Moses: "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy..." (**9:15**). As we have seen, God has, by his sovereign choice, decided to have mercy on those who respond in faith to the finished work of Christ upon the Cross.
- Now, in **9:18**, after using Pharaoh as a negative example of God's sovereign election, Paul writes: "Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden." In the same way that God has chosen to have mercy "on whom he wants to have mercy" so he has also chosen to harden "whom he wants to harden." We already know that God has chosen to have mercy on those with faith in his Son. But who is it that God has chosen to harden? Those who have hardened their own hearts against the Gospel!

Since Paul uses the example of Pharaoh as one who experienced the hardening of God, let's take a look at Pharaoh's own experience.

Seven times the **Exodus** account tells us that, despite the reality of God's power displayed before him, Pharaoh "hardened his heart" (**Exodus 7:13,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:6,34**). Then, finally, in response to his continual stubbornness, seven times **Exodus** says, "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" (**9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8,17**). Because Pharaoh hardened his own heart (in the early part of the **Exodus** story), God then hardens Pharaoh's heart (in the latter part of the **Exodus** story). In the face of Pharaoh's continuing heart-heartedness, God acted to "set" in his rebellion.

When a man like Pharaoh persistently refuses to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit there comes a point in time when the Holy Spirit's voice can no longer be heard. Only then is his influence withdrawn, and that person is left to that which he has chosen (see **Genesis 6:3; Isaiah 63:10; John 12:40**). This becomes punishment in itself, as we saw in **1:26-27**. It is important to realize that God is dealing here with time not eternity. Not until a man dies does he face eternal judgment (**Hebrews 9:27; Romans 2:16**) and until then God's mercy is extended to all (**Acts 17:30**) but is experienced only by those who repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (**Acts 3:19**).

God's hardening is experienced only by those who, by persistent hardening of their own hearts, refuse to repent and believe (**Romans 11:7-9**). This, says Paul, has been the case with the natural Jews. But never is the door slammed shut to God's wonderful mercy. Always there is the opportunity for a change in direction – as Paul himself experienced (**Acts 9:1-20**), and as the wicked king, Manasseh, experienced before him (**2 Chronicles 33:10-16**). This says Paul in **11:23-24**, is the hope for all Israel:

"I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved..."

The Hardening of the Heart

Read Joshua 11:19-20

The hardening action of God's Spirit upon rebellious mankind always has an aim – to fulfill his purpose upon the earth. The example of **Joshua 11:19-20** illustrates this. As the *NIV Bible Commentary* explains:

“God hardened the Canaanites' hearts, not to keep them from repenting, but to prevent them from surrendering to Israel in unrepentance.”²

Although God had commanded Israel to destroy the Canaanites completely, this had been because of the gross idolatry and immorality of the inhabitants of Canaan. Yet God still extended mercy to individual Canaanites – those who responded in faith to the God of the Israelites. One example of this is Rahab and her family, the sole survivors in the city of Jericho (**Joshua 2,6**).

Read Proverbs 28:14

The Lord constantly warns his people not to harden their hearts. Yet this is exactly what Israel had done with regard to the Gospel. They were repeating their old error – the error that took them into exile the first time.

Read Ezekiel 3:7

Read Hebrews 3:7-11

In **Isaiah 63:17**, Isaiah asked this question:

“Why, O Lord, do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so we do not revere you?...”

Isaiah really should not have been surprised by the reactions of Israel to his preaching, since God had warned him that this would happen as a result of his ministry (**Isaiah 6:9-13**). In fact, God knew that for those who had already closed their eyes and ears to God, the words of the prophet would only result in their hearts become even further hardened. For just as with Pharaoh, God's method of hardening the heart is through the very word that he speaks to the rebellious.

We must remember that God doesn't harden someone's heart until his mercy has been consistently refused. And even then, when God hardens someone's heart it is for a purpose – that he might display his righteous judgment so that others might learn.

And so we come back to Israel's rejection of the Gospel. This has been caused, says Paul, by a hardening of their hearts. Why has God allowed this hardening to take place? Paul answers this in **Romans 11:25**:

“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.”

This verse tells us two things about the hardening experienced by Israel:

- It is a hardening *in part* – not all Israel was hardened. Many had soft hearts that responded in faith to the message of the Gospel.
- It is a *temporary* hardening “until the full number of the Gentiles has come in” – God’s purpose in the hardening of the hearts of the majority of Jews was to allow his Gospel to spread throughout the Gentile world. This is a subject that Paul will focus on later in **Romans 11**.

Why Does God Still Blame Us?

Paul recognizes immediately that another objection will arise out of his example of Pharaoh. Even in his stubborn rebellion and unbelief, Pharaoh had been used by God to fulfill his purpose and display his power and glory. So the question would naturally arise:

“If, then, we all fulfill his will – one way or another – why does God still blame us and punish us?”

Paul, like the Lord Jesus so many times before him, ignores the actual question and goes right to the heart of the one asking it. He begins to deal with the attitude of heart, for behind the question “Why does God blame us?” is the attitude of blaming God!

In the face of this challenge against the justice of God’s sovereignty, Paul reverses it and challenges the heart-attitude of the one questioning God.

Who are you?

Read Romans 9:20-21

What right has sinful man to answer back to the righteous Creator of the universe? In the same way that Paul has painstakingly shown we have absolutely no right to God’s mercy, he now shows we have zero right to criticize God. Again his point is that God is God! The very objection raised is a slur against God’s character and reveals a heart devoid of the knowledge of God’s goodness and graciousness.

If there was one man who, in the eyes of natural man, would have the right to challenge God in this way, it would have been Job. But the Lord challenges him in **Job 38:2-5**:

“Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!...”

Finally, after hearing the Lord describe his might and sovereignty in all the wonders of his creation, Job’s response in **42:1-6** was:

“...‘I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall

answer me.’ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

Paul’s answer to those who would object to God’s sovereignty is to draw from an everyday example familiar to the Romans. He describes the relationship between a potter and his clay. But it is very important to remember that Paul is using this analogy in connection with the example he has just brought of Pharaoh. In other words, the analogy is related to a historical setting, and not to man’s eternal destiny. Paul is not saying that God, out of the same “lump” of humanity, creates some for salvation and eternal life and some for judgment and eternal damnation. This is both contrary to God’s nature and to the Gospel which Paul has been proclaiming. Indeed no – what Paul is speaking of is the fact he just mentioned before – that God uses all men to fulfill his sovereign purposes on earth.

God’s heart of love is crying out that all would respond, and he has done all that is needed to save us, but the decision to receive what he has done still lies with the individual. However, says Paul, in the scene of history, God will use all men, even those who reject him, to fulfill his purpose on earth. If a man chooses to rebel against God, as Pharaoh did, he will still use him – but he will be like a piece of pottery that is used for common purposes.

God’s will was fulfilled through Pharaoh on the earth (**Exodus 9:13-21**). However, those who respond to him are also called to fulfill his will on earth – to proclaim his name and reveal his power and glory – but they do it not in rebellion, but in joy and love for him. They are like pottery molded by the Lord for noble purposes.

What if God?

Read Romans 9:22-24

Two things are important for us to note in these three verses. First of all, Paul uses the phrase “what if.” He does not say outright that God does these things, but says, “What if he does?” In other words, “Who are you – a mere man – to challenge anything that God does? What if God does this or that? What if he even decided to create some for salvation and some for damnation? He is God and has *every* right to do *exactly* what he wants! Once again, Paul is emphasizing God’s complete sovereignty, leaving man with no right to challenge him.

Secondly, we must again remember that Paul’s analogy is not referring to eternity. Again Paul does *not* say in **9:22** that “God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, *created* the objects of his wrath and in this way *prepared* them for destruction.” No, it says God “bore with patience” the objects of his wrath. They were objects of his anger, not because he had created them for that, but because of their own rebellion and sin. And, just as he patiently let Pharaoh continue even though he persistently rebelled, God shows his great patience and long-suffering towards the sinner – first of all in the hope that he will eventually repent (as Paul already revealed in **2:4**) – but if not, then to use him as an object-lesson so that others will turn to him for grace and mercy. Those whose hearts are full of unbelief and rebellion (the objects of his wrath) are “prepared for

destruction” not because of God’s planning or design, but because they are reaping the fruit of their own actions. Sinful man will remain an object of God’s anger with “destruction” his ultimate destiny, unless he responds to the mercy God has made available to him through the Cross of Jesus Christ.

As with Pharaoh, God will use “the objects of his wrath” – the unrepentant sinner – to reveal his glory and the riches of his grace to the “objects of his mercy” – those of faith. These are “prepared in advance for glory” – for, as we saw in **8:28-30**, God has a glorious plan all prepared for those who believe and receive Christ. When you step into Christ, you step into the plan for glory he has already prepared in advance for those who believe.

The Objects of His Mercy

Read Romans 9:23-29

Paul has shown how God will use even those who reject him (the “objects of his wrath”) and, through them, reveal the riches of his glory to those who believe in him (the “objects of his mercy”). These, says Paul, are believers drawn from both the Jews and the Gentiles. Using the Old Testament, he shows how it was prophesied ahead of time that the blessings of the Gospel would come to the believing Gentile (**9:25-26; Hosea 2:23**) and to the believing remnant of Israel (**9:27-29; Isaiah 10:22-23; 1:9**)

Why had multitudes of Gentiles, who had previously shown no interest in a life of righteousness, flocked into the kingdom of God? And why, of all the “sand of the seashore” (the Jews), who continually and fervently sought for righteousness, had only a small percentage received the righteousness offered in the Gospel? The Jews, says Paul, had made one mistake, but it was the difference between life and death! They had balked at faith, insisting that they try to win the reward of righteousness by their own works.

The Two Ways

Read Romans 9:30-32

With this key issue of faith, and the prophetic scriptures in support, Paul sums up the whole of his answer by contrasting the two approaches made to God – one by the unbelieving Jew and the other by the believing Gentile and believing Jew:

The way of faith

Whereas the Jew spent his life searching for righteousness, and his national history was one of this search, the Gentile had no such background. Nor had he even attempted to achieve a righteous life for himself. But when the Gentile had suddenly and unexpectedly heard the good news of God’s love expressed in Christ, he had joyously received it! As the Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah in **Isaiah 65:1**:

“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’”

The Gentile had not tried to achieve righteousness by his own works, as the Jew had done, but he had attained righteousness through faith in the work of Jesus Christ. This should not have been a surprise to Israel, for God had continually foretold of this marvelous event. In **Psalm 87:4**, the psalmist records these amazing words:

“I will record Rahab (Egypt) and Babylon among those who acknowledge me – Philistia too, and Tyre, along with Cush – and will say, ‘This one was born in Zion.’”

The way of works

The Jews, however, “pursued” (or, followed after) the law of righteousness. They were like a small boy running after his strong, athletic hero. Panting and puffing, slipping and falling, he desperately tries to catch up, but his desire is an absolute impossibility. Thus the Jews had pursued the law of righteousness. They saw it before them, desired to achieve it, and put all their effort into it in their own works. They followed after it, but never attained to it!

Read Romans 9:32-33

Paul now gives the reason why so many of the Gentiles had embraced the Gospel while so many of the Jews had rejected it.

Many times the Old Testament uses the “stone” or “rock” as an analogy of the Lord (see **Genesis 49:24; 2 Samuel 22:2; Psalm 18:2, 31:3, 71:3**). So Paul, using this familiar analogy, quotes two verses from Isaiah and combines them together. Isaiah prophesied that “the Stone” which would be laid by God would have a different effect on two different types of people. To the unbeliever this Stone of God becomes a “stumbling stone”, but to the believer, a “sure foundation” for his life! To one it meant condemnation and death; to the other, forgiveness and life. Isaiah identifies this Stone as a Person – note his words “the one who trusts in *him*” – and Paul now says that Isaiah’s “Stone” is, in fact, Jesus Christ.

The Stumbling Stone

Read Isaiah 8:14

The Gospel’s message that faith in Christ is the way to righteousness, instead of bringing joyous release to the Jew, had been like a rock in his path that had tripped him up. He had stubbed his toe on faith in Christ and then kicked the stone aside to continue plodding along his own way again.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:22-24

Read 1 Peter 2:4-10

In **Acts 4:11**, Peter called Christ “the stone that the builders rejected.” Not only did Peter, quoting here from **Psalms 118:22-23**, identify Jesus as “the Stone,” but so did Jesus himself. After telling the parable of the tenant-farmers (**Matthew 21:33-44**), Jesus referred to this same scripture in the Psalms and proceeded to tell the unbelieving Jews that the kingdom would be taken from them and “given to a people who will produce its fruit” – those of the faith-line of Abraham.

The Precious Stone

But for the believer in Christ, Jesus is not a “stumbling stone” but “a precious stone.” In the last part of **9:33**, Paul is quoting from **Isaiah 28:16**. The earlier part of this Old Testament verse gives an even fuller description of the effect of this Stone on the believer:

“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, *a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation*; the one who trusts in him will never be dismayed.”

A precious cornerstone

A cornerstone is the stone that joins two walls. Faith in Jesus Christ is the uniting point between the Jew and Gentile!

Read Ephesians 2:14-17

The cornerstone was also the stone that acted as the starting-point of the building. Thus Jesus is called the “chief-cornerstone” of the Church (**Ephesians 2:19-20**).

A sure foundation

Just as the cornerstone is laid for a “sure foundation,” so those who have faith in Jesus Christ need never be afraid that their trust in him will prove to be ill-founded – for “they will never be put to shame”!

¹ *The NIV Bible Commentary*, Vol.2: The New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p.572.
² *The NIV Bible Commentary*, Vol.1: The Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p.308.