

rock, that is, upon this fundamental truth that I am the Christ the son of the living God, "I will build my church, and the gates of hades will not prevail against it. It is as if the Saviour said to Peter, "You have confessed me, I will now confess you. You have acknowledged me to be the foundation of the new kingdom, I will acknowledge you a stone upon that foundation. You have professed me the divine *petra*, I will profess you a divinely chosen *petros*." This sublime play upon the words signifying the disciple's name and the fundamental truth of Christian faith is not inconsistent with the dignified and earnest teaching of our Lord. Having said this much about the verbal meaning of the text, let us learn what the passage teaches us regarding the *foundation, development and permanency* of the church.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH.—"Upon this rock I will build my church." The term rock is used in the Old Testament to indicate God, as when we are asked to "ascribe greatness to our God, He is the Rock, His work is perfect." And in the fortieth Psalm the word is used in the sense of a foundation, "He set my feet upon a rock and established my goings." But the New Testament, especially, clearly teaches that Christ is the foundation rock upon which the church is built. The Apostle Paul says in his first epistle to the Corinthians, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And the Apostle Peter, to whom the memorable words of the text were uttered, afterwards in writing his first epistle, declared Christ to be the living foundation upon which he himself, together with all other believers, were built up into a spiritual house. To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house." Then he proceeds to show that Isaiah foretold that Christ would be the foundation of the church. "Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." God Himself laid the foundation of his church in the divinity of his own eternal son; and a more steadfast and imperishable foundation cannot be imagined. The universe stands by the word of God alone: "He said and it was; He commanded and it stood;" but the church rests upon a divine person, the son of the living God.

This divine foundation is *everything* to the church. Her life depends upon being in contact with it. For unlike all other foundations Christ vitalizes every stone which is built upon Him.