



The Church: Better Together

Summary and Goal

Scripture does not refer to the church as “the individuals of God” but rather “the people of God.” He has chosen us as His special possession, to know Him and make Him known to the world. In doing so, He fitted us together as a holy building of living stones, so that together we can more effectively point others toward His glory. Each of us brings diverse attributes and spiritual gifts that strengthens the whole body.

Main Passages

1 Peter 2:1-10

Session Outline

1. Fitting Living (1 Pet. 2:1-3)
3. Real Identity (1 Pet. 2:4-5, 9-10)
4. A Stone in Zion (1 Pet. 2:6-8)

Theological Theme

Peter called the believers to whom he was writing a “holy priesthood” and then a “royal priesthood.” Those who are in Christ undergo a foundational change in their identity and their purpose.

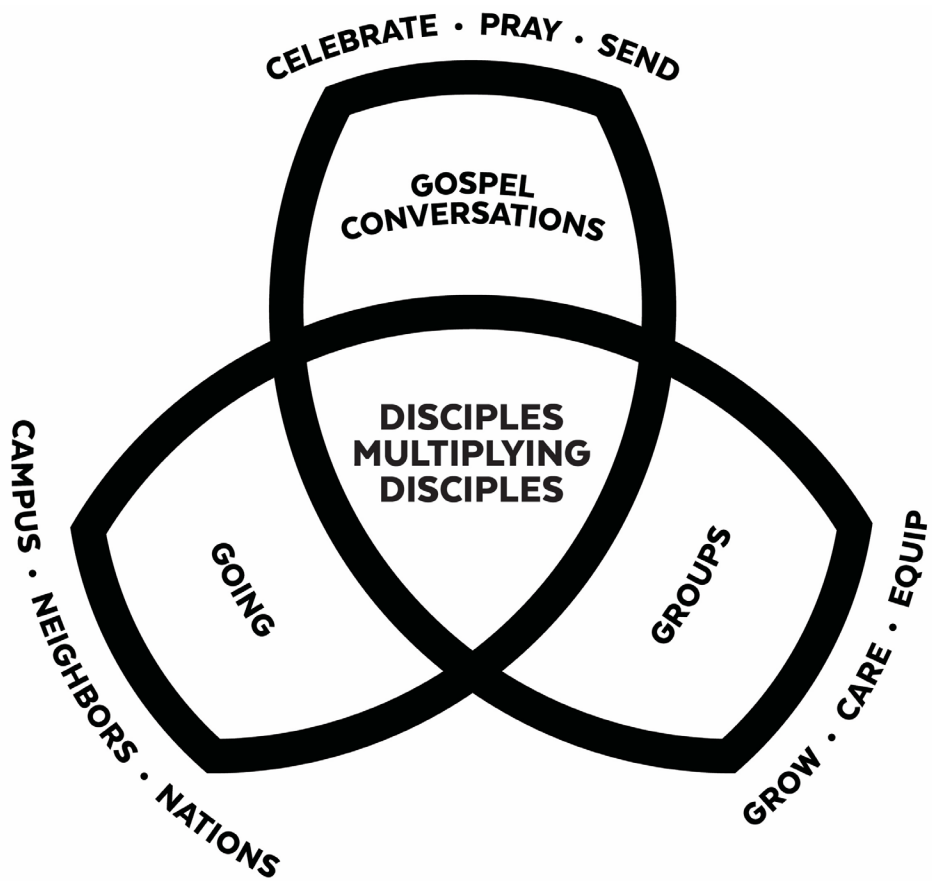
Christ Connection

Christ was presented by Peter in this passage as both the chosen and honored stone as well as the rejected stone. The person and work of Christ is the winnowing fork separating those who stumble and disobey from those who receive mercy.

Missional Application

Christians have not stumbled over Christ the cornerstone, but have believed. Christians must do the work of laying this stone before others, knowing that it will be offensive to some, but to others it will be the cornerstone upon which their eternity is built.

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

Suggested Opening

Pre-enlist a group member who has recently completed the church membership class “Discover” and have them share the benefits of this class. Welcome “new comers/visitors” whom your group invited based on last weeks encouragement.

Suggested Closing

Encourage regular attenders to join the church and attend the membership class so they can better understand how God wants them to be part of His church.

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Session Plan

The Church: Better Together

Introduction

- ❓ What factors do you take into consideration when looking to buy new clothes?
- ❓ Was there ever a time when you sought to replace your entire wardrobe? What about for your children or someone else in your home? If so, what led to this change?

God adopts people whom He saves into His family. John 1:12 says, “But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God.” Adoption is an act of God in which He makes us members of His family. Today’s passage explains what taking the family name does to a person. When a sin-dead soul is made alive by the grace and mercy of God in Christ, not only are they justified, but also they begin the process of sanctification. This is fitting, and it is inevitable. Those who are in Christ will be steadily conformed to the image of Christ over time.

1. Fitting Living (1 Pet. 2:1-3)

Things like malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander hinder our desire for Christ. By getting rid of them, Christians can yearn for spiritual growth in the same way babies yearn for milk. Peter knew this from experience. He understood the ups and downs of a Christian walk. He had numerous moments that revealed his need for spiritual maturity even with Jesus physically in his midst. Peter also knew that the Lord is good and because of that He wants believers to connect with Him.

- ❓ How often do you reflect on God's gracious work on your behalf in Christ? What helps you remember the gospel?
- ❓ What can you do to be more cognizant of the mercy and grace of God in saving you and adopting you?
- ❓ Why does it matter that our good works be undergirded and preceded by a right heart? Can you think of a time when Jesus spoke about the inconsistency of outward works and inward reality? What was His tone?

- Application: Is your life distinct from the world because of the work of Christ on your behalf and in your soul? What specific areas of your life have been significantly affected by God's work of salvation in your life?

2. Real Identity (1 Pet. 2:4-5,9-10)

Peter revealed an astounding piece of information in this passage. We are wise to try and capture the full weight of what he meant. Peter wrote twice that those who had been born again were now part of a "priesthood."

- What do you know about the role of a priest in the Old Testament? What were his duties?
- What does it mean that Christians are a part of a "priesthood" and not just individual priests?
- Application: Are you committed to serving and worshiping the one and true and living God by being an active and faithful member of our church? If you are a part of a "holy priesthood," what do you think that means regarding the priority you should give to involvement and love for the local church?

3. A Stone in Zion (1 Pet. 2:6-8)

Now we arrive at the linchpin of this passage. Peter pictured Christ as a stone in this passage with references to several Old Testament verses.

- According to Peter, what were the two ways in which the stone functioned?
- What does the "exclusivity of Christ" mean?
- Application: What is Christ to you—a stone over which you have stumbled or the honored cornerstone of your life? How can you know?

Conclusion

- Is there a "therefore" in your life? In other words, do you have a testimony of life without the grace and mercy of Christ but now a life that is nothing but His grace and mercy?
- For those who are in Christ, is your life marked by fleeing from sin and desiring the things of God, especially the pure milk of His Word? Explain your thoughts.
- How does knowing that you are a part of a royal priesthood change the way you think about your local church and your involvement there? In what ways is our church better together?

Next Step

Consider meeting by Care Groups or Gender Groups of 2-10 people this week for prayer, share, and care in a more personal opportunity to live out the Better Together theme.



Expanded Session Content

The Church: Better Together

Introduction

- ❓ What factors do you take into consideration when looking to buy new clothes?
- ❓ Was there ever a time when you sought to replace your entire wardrobe? What about for your children or someone else in your home? If so, what led to this change?

Adults may wear the same clothes for years or even decades. Children, on the other hand, need a whole new wardrobe every year. Why is that? It's simple. Kids grow. Adults grow too, but that's a different lesson. Sometimes we wish that children could stop growing. We would save a lot of money and time. But, of course, we don't want that. It isn't right or good if a child never grows, develops, or matures. We want them to grow because they should be making physical, mental, and emotional progress. We want them to mature, and if they don't we become concerned.

First Peter 2:2 says, "Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow up into your salvation." According to this verse, what are children of God to grow up to? To "grow up" into salvation simply means that you are to grow into the salvation that God has given you—you are to "grow into it" as a child should grow into an adult.

In our passage today, we will consider the profound change people go through when they experience the grace and mercy of God in Christ.

Session Summary

God adopts people whom He saves into His family. John 1:12 says, "But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God." Adoption is an act of God in which He makes us members of His family. Today's passage explains what taking the family name does to a person. When a sin-dead soul is made alive by the grace and mercy of God in Christ, not only are they justified, but also they begin the process of sanctification. This is fitting, and it is inevitable. Those who are in Christ will be steadily conformed to the image of Christ over time.



1. Fitting Living (1 Pet. 2:1-3)

One of the most important words in this passage is the first word that we read: “therefore.” This connector word indicates to us that everything we are about to read hinges upon what was said just before. In the first chapter of this letter, Peter emphasized two primary themes. First, he invited his readers to recall and rejoice in the fact that they had been given a “new birth” and a “living hope” (v. 3). Secondly, he expressed the fact that those who are in that blessed spiritual state have been called to holy living. Peter quoted the Old Testament saying, “Be holy because I am holy” (v. 16).

In other words, Peter set before his readers the glorious good work that God had done for them in the person of Christ Jesus. Not only were they rescued from the wrath that they were due for their sins, but He brought them in and made them a part of His household. Peter reminded them of their great hope.

Jesus’ primary mission on earth wasn’t to feed the hungry, heal the sick, or even to teach the masses. Rather, Christ came to give Himself as an atoning sacrifice for sinners. Jesus’ death at the insistence of the Jews and at the hand of the Romans was not a spoiled end to the incarnation but the exact point of the incarnation. What was the meaning of Jesus’ death? Second Corinthians 5:21 may summarize it best: “He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” The sin of man was imputed to Christ. Christ’s righteousness was imputed to man. The word “imputation” is an accounting term; it means “to apply to one’s account.” The old King James word is “reckon.” In theological terms, we speak of a double imputation that takes place in justification. Our sin was applied to Jesus’ account at the cross, and Jesus’ righteousness was applied to our account.


Jesus’ work on the cross gives us a secure hope because the hope was gained by Christ’s work alone, not ours. Had we done something to attain our hope, then surely, we could do something to lose it. But we didn’t, so we can’t. Thus, Jesus was the hope of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the hope of the nations. Jesus secured salvation for all that look to him.

-  How often do you reflect on God’s gracious work on your behalf in Christ? What helps you remember the gospel?
-  What can you do to be more cognizant of the mercy and grace of God in saving you and adopting you?


The natural result of what comes before the “therefore” immediately follows it. Peter indicated in the first three verses that Christians live their lives by two general guides. First, they should stop sinning. Be careful to recognize that they weren’t begrudgingly avoiding sin because now they owed God something. Their affections and desires have been changed. They now desire God and hate what is opposed to God. Because sin is offensive to their Beloved, they hate it, yet they still struggle with the old nature that continues to desire sin.

Things like malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander hinder our desire for Christ. By getting rid of them, Christians can yearn for spiritual growth in the same way babies yearn for milk. Peter knew this from experience. He understood the ups and downs of a Christian walk. He had numerous moments that revealed his need for spiritual maturity even with Jesus physically in his midst. Peter also knew that the Lord is good and because of that He wants believers to connect with Him.

Secondly, Christians will now pursue God through faith and obedience. Peter made it clear that God’s Word was key to that endeavor: “Desire the pure milk of the Word.” What’s important to note here is the precept that the inner condition is the foundation for outward good works.

 Why does it matter that our good works be undergirded and preceded by a right heart? Can you think of a time when Jesus spoke about the inconsistency of outward works and inward reality? What was His tone?


Glorifying God doesn’t mean just doing right; it means being right. Christians are made righteous in the sight of God once for all in Christ. That’s called justification. It’s a one-time event that is accomplished fully by God Himself. The work of salvation doesn’t stop there, however. Though Christians are assured of their place in God’s family, they are then called to live as His children. That’s what Paul meant when he said that Christians are to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). Christians are to become more and more like Jesus as they await His coming. Becoming more like Jesus is both an inward and outward transformation. Jesus was probably the harshest with those who excelled at outward forms of devotion while remaining spiritually bankrupt inside. Listen to what He said to the religious leaders in Israel, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and every kind of impurity” (Matt. 23:27).

 Application: Is your life distinct from the world because of the work of Christ on your behalf and in your soul? What specific areas of your life have been significantly affected by God’s work of salvation in your life?

2. Real Identity (1 Pet. 2:4-5,9-10)


The opening few words of this section—“as you come to him”—are significant because they show that believers are actively participating in God’s work and God’s purpose on a daily basis. Peter was called by Christ, and he came to Christ again and again throughout his life.

Peter revealed an astounding piece of information in this passage. We are wise to try and capture the full weight of what he meant. Peter wrote twice that those who had been born again were now part of a “priesthood.”


 What do you know about the role of a priest in the Old Testament? What were his duties?

The priests of the nation of Israel were a special class of people set apart to be the individuals who mediated between God and the nation through prayer, sacrifice, and worship. They were the ones who went into God’s presence and experienced His glory.

This is astounding news! Those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ now have the privileges of the Old Testament priests. They have direct access to the one true and living God to pray, worship, and serve Him with no barriers and no distance. This is possible because of what Christ has done on their behalf. Now, those who are in Christ are to “proclaim the praises of the one who called [them] out of darkness into his marvelous light” (v. 9).

 What does it mean that Christians are a part of a “priesthood” and not just individual priests?

Christians aren’t independent, autonomous individuals who worship and serve the Lord alone. Rather, God has instituted His church through which this “royal priesthood” is to live out their calling. Individual Christians gather and covenant together in local churches. They submit to one another. They worship and serve the Lord together as a body. They edify and encourage one another by using their gifts. A Christian’s identity isn’t found so much in his or her individual relationship with God (though this is important) as it is in belonging to and functioning in the people of God.

 Application: Are you committed to serving and worshiping the one and true and living God by being an active and faithful member of our church? If you are a part of a “holy priesthood,” what do you think that means regarding the priority you should give to involvement and love for the local church?


The Living Stone

Jesus is called the living stone and the cornerstone, but also the rejected stone and the stone to stumble over. Peter assured his readers that they are God's valuable possession—living stones built into a spiritual house. They are part of a living temple that is the corporate people of God, his unique possession. A chosen race (v. 9; cp. vv. 4,6; Is 43:20) seems to refer to the corporate unity of believers. In Christ, believers of all races are unified. They are also a royal priesthood—a collective company of priests—who offer up spiritual sacrifices to God (v. 5). Believers have been called out of darkness and into his marvelous light. The transfer from darkness to light is a common NT description of conversion (Ac 26:18; 2Co 4:6; Eph 5:8).

3. A Stone in Zion (1 Pet. 2:6-8)

Now we arrive at the linchpin of this passage. Peter pictured Christ as a stone in this passage with references to several Old Testament verses.

Peter referred to Isaiah 28:16 in verse 4 and then quoted it in verse 6. Then in verse 7, Peter quoted Psalm 118:22, naming Jesus as the cornerstone. The stone imagery takes off from there; Christ is the cornerstone, the stone on which the entire building is set. Churches, bodies of believers, are the stones that are built up together to form a spiritual house. These stones work together to form the structure as a church; it is not about any individual but about how individuals can be concerned for one another in the church and for those who will come after them.

 According to Peter, what were the two ways in which the stone functioned?

Christ, the stone in Zion, was either the honored cornerstone or He was a stone to stumble over. Christ was either cherished and worshiped or He was an offense. Peter wrote that those who honored the cornerstone and believed would “never be put to shame” while others were destined to stumble over the stone because they disobey the word (vv. 6-8).

Christians are often reviled, mocked, and accused of intolerance in today's culture because of this very teaching. The contention of popular culture in the West today is to assert that any claims on exclusivity of truth are intolerant. In fact, Peter may very well be accused of hate speech today. Yet Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

 What does the “exclusivity of Christ” mean?

The “exclusivity of Christ” refers to the belief that there is only one way to heaven. The opposite of this teaching is “universalism.” This idea argues that there are many ways to God and everyone must find their own road. It is often likened to various trails leading to the peak of a mountain. There are many roads, but they all lead to the top. This is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible is clear that there is only one road to salvation, and that road is Jesus Christ. All other roads lead to an eternity separated from God.

It's for this reason that we prioritize the spiritual mandate over the social mandate. The spiritual mandate is the biblical imperative to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with all people groups. The social mandate is the biblical imperative to meet the temporal needs (for example, hunger) of those in our communities. Both are mandates, but the spiritual mandate is more important because it deals with eternal issues, whereas the social mandate deals with temporal issues.

- ❓ Application: What is Christ to you—a stone over which you have stumbled or the honored cornerstone of your life? How can you know?

Conclusion

In this letter, Peter sought to encourage and equip the Christian churches outside of Israel. These would have been made up of both Jews and Gentiles. He endeavored to make them see who they were, what made them that way, and what it meant for everyday life.

- ❓ Is there a “therefore” in your life? In other words, do you have a testimony of life without the grace and mercy of Christ but now a life that is nothing but His grace and mercy?
- ❓ For those who are in Christ, is your life marked by fleeing from sin and desiring the things of God, especially the pure milk of His Word? Explain your thoughts.
- ❓ How does knowing that you are a part of a royal priesthood change the way you think about your local church and your involvement there? In what ways is our church better together?

Next Step

Consider meeting by Care Groups or Gender Groups of 2-10 people this week for prayer, share, and care in a more personal opportunity to live out the Better Together theme.

Prayer of Response

Pray for our local church. Pray that the membership will grasp the meaning of the priesthood. Pray that we will rejoice in that truth and then live in accordance with its implications. Pray especially that our members will be faithful to their local church and endeavor to build up the body by the use of their gifts.

Additional Resources

- *Be Hopeful* by Warren Wiersbe
- *1–2 Peter* by R.C. Sproul
- *1 & 2 Peter & Jude* by Thomas Schreiner

For Next Week

Session Title

- The Church: Love For One Another

Main Passages

- 1 John 3:11-24

Session Outline

1. Supplying Physical Needs (1 John 3:17)
2. Loving by Telling (1 John 3:18)
3. Encouragement Toward Good Works (1 John 3:14)

Memorize

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow up into your salvation, ³ if you have tasted that the Lord is good.

- 1 Peter 2:1-3

Daily Readings

- Monday - 1 Peter 2:1-10
- Tuesday - 1 Corinthians 12:12-14
- Wednesday - Ephesians 4:1-6
- Thursday - Galatians 3:28
- Friday - 1 Corinthians 1:10
- Saturday - Colossians 3:12-14

Historical Context of 1 Peter

Purpose

Peter wrote to encourage suffering believers in Asia Minor to stand firm for Christ in the midst of persecution. He urged them to do so by focusing on their spiritual privileges and, more specifically, the place where their rights and privileges lay: the next life. Believers in Jesus are “exiles” (1:1; 2:11) and “strangers” (2:11) in this world, a land of sojourn where they have no real rights or privileges. Inheritance rights, privileges, and justice for Christians really belong to another realm to which God has delivered believers—heaven, their ultimate home.

First Peter emphasizes that suffering is normal for believers because they are temporary residents in this world. As such, they lack rights and receive no justice in this foreign land. Though suffering occurs on earth for temporary residents, their inheritance and exaltation await them in their eternal homeland.

Author

The author of 1 Peter identified himself as “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). He viewed himself as a divinely ordained, directly commissioned, authoritative representative of the Lord Jesus himself. Several statements in the letter indicate that the Peter who plays a prominent role in the Gospels is the author. For example, he called himself an “elder and witness” to Christ’s sufferings (5:1). Further, he described Christ’s crucifixion with an intimate knowledge that only a disciple would have of that event (2:21-24).

Setting

The recipients of 1 Peter are identified in 1:1. Peter wrote to the “exiles dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” These were Roman provinces located in the northern part of what is now modern Turkey, unless Galatia includes the Galatia in the southern region of Asia Minor. These people were likely persecuted Gentile Christians. They had earlier been involved in idolatry (4:3), were ignorant (1:14) and “empty” (1:18) before they came to Christ, and formerly were “not a people” but now were “God’s people” (2:9-10).

Special Features

First Peter provided encouragement to suffering believers living in northern Asia Minor who faced intense persecution. The letter encourages faithfulness while under oppression. Specifically, God’s holy people should lead distinctive lifestyles as temporary residents in a foreign land. Although they will suffer for Christ while in this non-Christian world, they should remember that heaven is their future homeland.

Extended Commentary

1 Peter 2:1-10

2:1-2. This section logically flows out of the previous chapter and is connected to it with the word therefore which draws the reader back to the subject of the Word of God. The Word of God was the content of Peter's preaching. The life-changing power of the Word must affect our lives as Christians. Reborn children of God should exhibit their new life in their day-to-day conduct. Believers ought to exhibit a different quality of life, marked by continuous growth (see v. 2c).

Newborn babies connects chapter 2 directly with the last section of chapter 1 with its reference to new birth (1:23). "Newborn babies" does not indicate that these readers were new Christians. Some were thirty years old in the faith. All believers need to long for the spiritual milk or nourishment of God's Word in the same way that a baby longs for milk. Crave refers to an intense and continuous desire. Spiritual growth begins and continues through the application of the Word of God (see 1:23-25).

These verses list five sins of attitude and speech that we must rid ourselves of if spiritual growth is to proceed. "Rid" is a forceful word that calls us to "cast off or aside" certain practices that are deterrents to spiritual growth. Malice, an attitude similar to hatred, is the desire to inflict pain, harm, or injury on another person. It includes the holding of grudges and acting out of these grudges against others.

Deceit refers to deliberate dishonesty, to speaking or acting with ulterior motives. Anything less than speaking the full and honest truth from the heart is deceit. This vice is the selfish, two-faced attitude that deceives and hurts others for personal gain.

Hypocrisy has an intriguing history. It comes from a verb meaning "to answer." A hypocrite originally was simply a person who answered. Then the word came to mean "an actor," a person who takes part in a stage drama, specifically the interactive narrative parts of question and answer in the play. From there, this word came to mean a person who is acting out a part and concealing his true motives.

Envy must also be cast aside. Envy begins with a desire to possess what belongs to someone else. But it is more than this. It is a resentful discontent.

Envy often finds expression through slander of every kind—the final behavior attitude that Peter mentions in verse 1. "Slander" (katalaleo) literally means "to speak against someone." It suggests running others down verbally. It is speech that deliberately assaults the character of other persons. It is any speech that harms another person's status or reputation.

None of these practices should have any place in those people who are born again. In obedience to the command of God, believers are to rid themselves of such attitudes and actions.

2:3. Believers in Jesus Christ have experienced a taste of God's grace in their lives. God's grace is no excuse for us to behave as we please. The goodness and grace of God should be our greatest incentives to spiritual growth and progress.

2:4. We are coming to Christ, the living Stone. Christ is the living, resurrected, and life-giving God. Each person accepts or rejects this “living Stone.” Rejection means “to examine and reject because of lack of value.” This rejection refers to the people of the first century who ultimately crucified Christ and to anyone since that time who has not embraced him as personal Savior.

God the Father places infinite value upon Christ. Precious (entimon) describes our costly redemption through Christ, mentioned in 1:19 (timio).

2:5. The decision to believe in Jesus Christ admits an individual into a spiritual building program. When anyone comes to Christ, as the Living Stone, a new stone is added to God’s spiritual building— Christ’s church. As a spiritual building, the church is to be influenced or dominated by the Holy Spirit. Christians are a new temple of God under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit. Together we function as a holy priesthood. All believers are priests. Every Christian has immediate and direct access to God through Jesus Christ and serves God personally by bringing others to God.

A priest offers spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. What are spiritual sacrifices? The Old Testament speaks of spiritual sacrifices of prayer, thanksgiving, praise, and repentance. The New Testament goes even further by identifying spiritual sacrifices as (1) the offering of our bodies to God for his service; (2) the offerings of our financial gifts; and (3) practical, loving service to other people. Spiritual sacrifices in the New Testament involve our bodies, our money, and our time (Rom. 12:1-2). When you come to Christ as the Living Stone, you become a part of a building, the church. Your growth begins to speak for itself as you offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.

2:6-8. Peter wove together two strands of Old Testament prophecy to further illustrate the centrality of Jesus Christ in the life of the individual Christian and the corporate church. He drew the picture of the precious cornerstone from Isaiah 28:16 and the rejected capstone from Psalm 118:22. The cornerstone or foundation stone established the design and structure of the building. The capstone might describe a foundation stone or, more likely, the topmost piece, the finishing or crowning touch to the building. The point is that from beginning to end, the church is built on Jesus Christ. Jesus is both the foundation cornerstone on which his church is built and the capstone up to which it grows. Jesus Christ is always the foundation of all that the individual Christian—as well as the church as a whole—believes.

Of course, not everyone accepts this Living Stone (see 2:4). The builders of verse 7 picture anyone who rejects Jesus Christ. Such people continually stumble and fall over who Jesus Christ is. They refuse to acknowledge him as the cornerstone of their lives. They disobey the message. This word carries the strong sense of refusing to believe. Despite this kind of rejection, God, the chief architect, takes this rejected stone and lays it down as the foundation stone. God the Father honored Christ by giving him the preeminent position in the building of the church.

In the position of preeminence, Christ is unique. He is a fortress; he is a refuge or stronghold; he is the foundation for every generation; he is eternal. We should build our lives on this rock and continually turn to him— the one who holds us together during difficult times.

2:9-10. In the midst of a culture that stumbles over Jesus Christ, disobeys the message of Christ, and then persecutes any who embrace Christ, believers can easily become discouraged from continuing in the

journey with Christ. The thought of further growing pains is certainly not attractive to everyone. So Peter laid out in ascending order some of the incredible spiritual riches that believers have in Christ. This encourages us and reminds us of the value God places on each of us. It also ties us to the Old Testament heritage of the people of God, since much of the language here comes from Exodus 19.

A chosen people emphasizes God's loving initiative in bringing people to himself and allowing us to be a part of his church. A royal priesthood reminds us as believers that as priests we serve royalty. We have not landed a maid-service position. We are part of God's "forever kingdom." A holy nation emphasizes that God has set apart the church for his use and that individual believers have a valuable contribution to make to his church.

"A chosen people," "a people belonging to God," and "the people of God" emphasize God's ownership in our lives. Throughout history God has claimed for himself his own people as his prized possession. Christians are a people for God to possess. A very ordinary thing acquires a new value if it has been possessed by some famous person.

Several years ago, an auction was held that focused on sports memorabilia. Dan Quayle's little league uniform was up for grabs, as were Michael Jordan's running shoes. Although in themselves these items were of little value, they were sold for incredible amounts of money simply because of who had owned them. Peter's repeated emphasis with the term people is that as a believer I may be a very ordinary person, but I acquire an immense new value because I belong to God and am possessed by him.

All of this has come to us not because we deserve it or have somehow earned it but because of God's mercy. The people who first read Peter's letter had lived without God and Christ for a long time. During that time they had tried through many ways to obtain mercy for themselves, but had failed. In coming by faith to Christ, they received the mercy that so long had eluded them. God's mercy came to them in tangible form, bringing the gifts of forgiveness and eternal life.

The New Testament is consistent in suggesting that these kinds of benefits—extended to us through the mercy of God—are not only to be received with gratitude but are to motivate each believer to testify verbally on behalf of God and Christ. Verse 9 contains a purpose statement that describes our response. We are to declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Declare means "to advertise, to proclaim." A very literal rendering of the verb would be "to tell out or tell forth." This suggests we should give a high priority to verbal declarations.

The word is used in other contexts to describe the rehearsing in adoring language of God's righteousness and praises. The praises of God or Christ is a word picture for his character. One translator suggested that "praises" means his "excellent attributes." The Christian is to be an instrument that publicizes the attributes and character of God.¹

References

1. Walls, David. *I & II Peter, I II & III John, Jude*. Edited by Max Anders. Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2012.

Author Bio

David Walls (I & II Peter, I II & III John, Jude)

David Walls serves as the senior minister of First Congregational Church, Traverse City, Michigan. He is the author of four books, a frequent speaker on college campuses and at Bible conferences, and serves as an adjunct professor at Asbury Theological Seminary. He is married to Patricia and they have two adult sons, Jeremy and Kent.

Max Anders (I & II Peter, I II & III John, Jude)

Dr. Max Anders is the author of over 25 books, including the bestselling *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*, and is the creator and general editor of the 32-volume Holman Bible Commentary series. He has taught on the college and seminary level and is a veteran pastor. Max provides resources and discipleship strategies at www.maxanders.com to help people grow spiritually.

Warren Wiersbe (Be Hopeful)

Warren W. Wiersbe, former pastor of the Moody Church and general director of *Back to the Bible*, has traveled widely as a Bible teacher and conference speaker. Because of his encouragement to those in ministry, Dr. Wiersbe is often referred to as “the pastor’s pastor.” He has ministered in churches and conferences throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Central and South America, and Europe. Dr. Wiersbe has written over 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible, which has sold more than four million copies. At the 2002 Christian Booksellers Convention, he was awarded the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dr. Wiersbe and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.

R.C. Sproul (1-2 Peter)

R.C. Sproul (1939–2017) was founder of Ligonier Ministries in Orlando, Fla. He was also copastor of Saint Andrew’s Chapel, first president of Reformation Bible College, and executive editor of *Tabletalk* magazine. His radio program, *Renewing Your Mind*, is still broadcast daily on hundreds of radio stations around the world and can also be heard online.

Thomas Schreiner (1 & 2 Peter & Jude)

Thomas R. Schreiner (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) is James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. His numerous books include *New Testament Theology* and *Romans* in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.