



TITLE

SUBTITLE

1 PETER 2:4-10

WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS, WE ARE GOD'S TEMPLE 1 PETER 2:5A	25
WE ARE A HOLY PRIESTHOOD – 1 PETER 2:5B	25
WE WILL SHARE IN CHRIST'S GLORY – 1 PETER 2:6-8	26
WE ARE SPECIAL PEOPLE WITH A SPECIAL MISSION 1 PETER 2:9-10	26
PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 2:11-3:7	28

God wants us to think of ourselves as He wanted the Old Testament Jesus to think of themselves — very special people, set apart by God for His unique purposes. It should make us feel honored, of course; but more importantly, it should move us to sense the responsibility we have to fulfill the purposes for which He has set us apart.

In our introduction to First Peter we heard that Dr. Martin Luther put this brief letter on his “short list” of most important books in the entire Bible. In Luther’s Works there are over seventy references to just these six verses (2:4-10), which are the basis for Lesson 4. This must have been one of his favorite passages.

WE ARE IN GOOD COMPANY

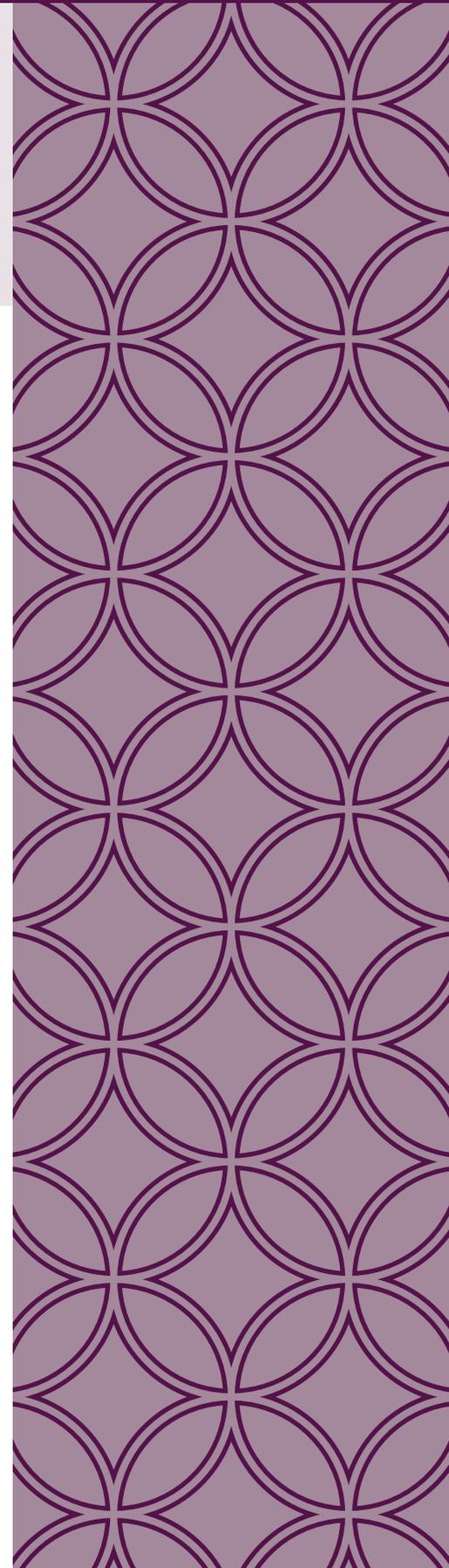
In these verses, Peter continues his “Call to Holiness.” He highlights the great privileges that we enjoy as followers of Christ. All of this can be a tremendous source of inspiration for us as we strive to be “God’s People.”

WE HAVE A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

1 PETER 2:4

Peter uses imagery from the Old Testament. Worship life revolved around the Temple in Jerusalem, and it focused upon the “Holy of Holies,” which was separated from the rest of the temple areas by a huge veil sixty feet long, thirty feet wide, and at least four inches thick.

Without a doubt, Peter had witnessed the emotionally and spiritually charged rituals, which related to this special place. He had watched as the high priest sacrificed an ox; and then, having sprinkled himself and his priestly garments with blood, solemnly made his way behind the veil into the very presence of the almighty God.



It is to this dramatic moment in the religious experience of Old Testament worshippers that Peter is alluding when he says, “Come to Him” (2:4). The Greek word for “come to” (*proxserxomenoi*) is regarded as a specialized word for “drawing near” to God in worship. Grammatically, it is a present tense participle, which has the sense of continuing action. “Be people who are always drawing near.”

Peter goes on to identify the “him” into whose presence we are to draw near, as “that living stone.” Someone has called this a “daring metaphor,” because stones do not live. However, Peter was in pretty good company. None other than Jesus Himself had “personalized” the idea of a stone. Jesus quoted the Messianic prophecy in Psalm 118:22, “The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner” (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17). Clearly, Jesus implied that He was the stone referred to. See also Acts 4:11. There also seems to be strong evidence that “Stone” or “Rock” was a Messianic title among the Jews, as well as among the Christians of that day.

The important point which Peter makes here is that when we “keep drawing near” to Jesus, it is virtually the same experience that was the primary focus of the Old Testament worship in the temple — coming into the very presence of God Himself.

Peter acknowledges that not everybody is ready to accept the idea that Jesus is the fulfillment of this Messianic prophecy and the “Rock” on which God would build His New Testament Church. He is the stone “rejected by men.” Maybe this was a veiled warning to his readers. He wants them to realize that when they take their stand with God and accept Jesus as the Stone “chosen and precious,” they are bound to have the opposition of unbelieving people. He wants them (and us) to be prepared to face this reality.

WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS, WE ARE GOD’S TEMPLE

1 PETER 2:5A

After this little “aside,” Peter returns to the imagery of temple construction. If Christ is the “living” stone that will be the foundation or chief cornerstone, Peter says, then those who “keep coming to Him” will also “like living stones be...built into a spiritual house.” The Greek text emphasizes the uniqueness of this concept. The placement of the words has the intent of having it say: “Even you yourselves are living stones.” (Where Dr. Livingstone got his name!) Peter wanted his readers to get a sense of what he was telling them. In effect, he was saying that the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem, which was to serve as the place of God’s Presence on earth, was being replaced. It was only a symbol of the even more magnificent Church of the New Testament — the Holy Christian Church of which they were an integral part. Through their spiritual union with Christ, they and fellow-believers of all ages are the very Dwelling Place of God on earth.

WE ARE A HOLY PRIESTHOOD

1 PETER 2:5B

Peter shifts the imagery from the idea of believers being the “house of God” to the activities, which take place within the Temple. Only the descendants of Levi were allowed to serve as priests. Acting on behalf of the people, the priests would take the sacrifices and present them to God. Here Peter assures his readers that in the new scheme of things, they not only did not need the temple, they also no longer needed priests to represent them before God. They have the privilege of coming into the presence of God on their own (cp. Hebrews 4:16).

Like the priests of old, there were sacrifices for them to bring to God. They were privileged to bring “spiritual sacrifices.” The concept of sacrifices, even in the Old Testament, was not limited to animals or produce. Contrition, prayer,

praise, and thanksgiving are all described as “acts of sacrifice” (cp. Psalm 50:14, 51:17, 107:22). In Romans 12:1, Paul points to the most important sacrifice that we can offer. We should offer to God our very selves.

The term “acceptable” refers to the temple regulation, which required that worshippers have their sacrifices examined and approved by priests before they could be taken to the altar of sacrifice. Peter writes that we can be sure that what we offer will be “acceptable to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

WE WILL SHARE IN CHRIST’S GLORY

1 PETER 2:6-8

To give credibility to the “spin” that he puts on the Old Testament symbolism of the Rock, Peter declares “For it stands in Scripture.” Peter shows no hesitation in declaring that Jesus was the fulfillment of a Messianic prophecy from Isaiah with which everyone was familiar. He is the One to believe in and he adds that whoever does, will not “be put to shame.”

Having said that, Peter continues (v.7), the imagery of the Rock and describes Jesus as a “stone of Destiny.” On the one hand, “To you therefore who believe, he is precious.” In Greek, this sentence has no verb, and rather literally says, “Therefore the honor to you, the believer.” This fits with the ending of the previous verse. Those who believe in Jesus will never experience shame; rather they will share in His glory and honor.

Not for those who reject Him. For them He will be “a stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall” (v.8). (See also Isaiah 8:14). Like many biblical metaphors, the idea of a “stone that will make men stumble” may have its origin in history. In the days of Jesus and His Apostles, we are told, the Jews told the story of a massive stone that had somehow been brought to the construction

site for the Temple. The workers kept bumping into it, bruising their shoulders and shins or stubbing their toes, losing their balance and their tempers, as well. It was this way until a prophet came along and pointed out that this stone would make a great cornerstone. It was put in place. It fit beautifully, and the construction continued.

Whether or not this story is authentic, the application Peter makes is valid. Christ was a stumbling block to most of the religious leaders of His day. He was a constant source of irritation and anger to them. They rejected Him and in the end were put to shame.

At the close of verse 8, Peter gives his diagnosis of the problem. The problem wasn’t with Jesus. The problem was their stubborn refusal to obey the Word of God. Disobedience means more than just a failure to comply. It has the added meaning of actively rebelling against God and His Church. This led to the crucifixion and later to the hostility, which the early church experienced and continues to the present time.

The phrase “as they were destined to do,” at the close of verse 8, seems to raise the question of predestination. The word for “destined” in Greek is in the aorist indicative to indicate a completed event. Does it mean that God selected certain people in advance to be people who would stumble against the Gospel and reject Christ? Some Bible students say that the destiny of those who are lost, is tied to their disobedience of the Word. Those who persist in rejecting the Word will perish. It is simply “cause and effect.”

WE ARE SPECIAL PEOPLE WITH A SPECIAL MISSION

1 PETER 2:9-10

In contrast to the lot of those who disobeyed, Peter goes on to say those who accepted the Gospel can lay claim to all of the great titles, which God had

given to Israel of old. Like Israel, believers are a “chosen race.” In modern terms, with this new set of spiritual genes, which they have in common, they are a different breed from the rest of humanity.

They are to think of themselves also as “a royal priesthood.” This term has its roots in Exodus 19:3–6, where God instructed Moses to tell the children of Israel “...and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests.” This seems to emphasize the inclusiveness of this priesthood. Every member of the kingdom is a priest, or official representative of God on earth. No matter how young or how old we might be, we represent God in the world today. We not only have the right, but the duty to tell the world of God’s love.

If we think of “royal” as an adjective, it suggests that we occupy a place of honor in God’s kingdom. Revelation 20:6 declares, “...they shall be priests of God and of His Christ, and they shall reign with Him.” The term “a holy nation” looks at the high standing of New Testament believers from a different angle. The Hebrew word for “holy” means literally “cut off at both ends.” It is a “picture word” which includes the notion that it is something, which is cut off at both ends so that it will be removed and set apart for special purpose. In this case, the term “set apart” would convey the thought Peter wanted to express. God wants us to think of ourselves as He wanted the Old Testament Jews to think of themselves — very special people, set apart by God for His unique purposes. It should make us feel honored, of course; but more importantly, it should move us to sense the responsibility we have to fulfill the purposes for which He has set us apart.

Another concept that Israel of old cherished was the title “God’s own people.” The modern translation of Exodus 19:5 quotes God as saying to Israel that if they will keep the covenant they will be “my own possession among all the people.” The significance of this title lies in the thought that we

who are Christians have the assurance that we have a claim upon God’s fatherly goodness and mercy, because we truly belong to Him.

Peter says, these are wonderful titles, which you and I can claim for ourselves. But it doesn’t stop there. As people of God who have experienced first-hand His goodness, we are called to “declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (v.9). Peter’s word for “declare” is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, but it is used several times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX) to speak of the praises of God (e.g. Psalm 9:14, 71:15, 73:28). This is “Course 101” in witnessing. Witnessing of the best kind, which we all can do, doesn’t involve great knowledge of theology, it doesn’t mean “one-up-manship” in dialogue and argumentation. It simply means being ready to tell others what God has done for us, personally. No one can argue with you when you make such declarations. But when you do this you hold up the light of truth about God and His love in Christ. When you lift Jesus up, He will “draw” people to Himself (John 12:32).

Peter’s closing thought for this section refers to the Old Testament prophet Hosea. All of the honor and privilege they can claim becomes even more marvelous when they consider once again how it all happened. Like Israel in the days of Hosea, they were people who had been far from God. They were a “No People.” Before they came to Christ, they were people who had never received mercy. But, now they had experienced in Christ the amazing mercy of God and had been brought into this special relationship with Him and into the fellowship of believers. As they thought of how far they had come, it should increase their sense of appreciation and wonder. And it should inspire them even more to want to “declare the wonderful deeds of God.” It should move them to really be God’s own people in thought, word and deed.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 PETER 2:11-3:7

Heavenly Father, I cherish the honor of being part of Your family. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit so that I may always live in such a way that people around me will be led to appreciate the presence of Your people on earth and ultimately give glory to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

1 Peter 2:11-12

1. By using descriptive terms at the beginning of verse 11, what does Peter want us to remember about ourselves?

2. What does Peter (v.11) tell us we really need to watch out for while we live here on earth?

Write what comes to mind when you hear the phrase "passions of the flesh" (v.11).

Look at Paul's list of "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19). Do you find any "sins of the flesh" to which you think "church people" might be particularly susceptible?

3. What does Peter say should be our attitude towards these "passions?"

When these "passions" are given free reign in our lives, what is at stake?

4. In verse 12 what does Peter say we should be passionate about?

Since most of the people Peter is writing to were non-Jews, who did he mean by the term "Gentiles?"

What does Peter say is the primary reason we should be concerned about our behavior in the presence of non-Christians?

1 Peter 2:13-17

5. Even though we are really "citizens of another kingdom," what should be our attitude toward human institutions? What does Paul say (Romans 13:1) about the origin of human institutions?

6. Slander against Christians included many things, even cannibalism (Lord's Supper). How does God advise silencing such slander?

Even though we are God's "free people," how are we always to think of ourselves during our time on earth (v.16)?

1 Peter 2:18-25

7. What incentive does Peter offer for "domestic servants" to be dutiful even if their masters are abusive?

Whose example should inspire them?

Can you think of any reason he preferred Isaiah's words (Isaiah 53:9) rather than referring to his own experience?

To whom did Jesus entrust His destiny (v.23)?

What application can you make to employer/employee relations in the 21st Century?

How does this effect membership in labor unions?

1 Peter 3:1-7

8. How does Peter's appeal for women to be "submissive" sound to you?

Do you think this requires Christian women to "submit" to abuse? (Explain)

What incentive do Christian wives have, especially if they happen to have unbelieving husbands?

9. In verses 3-5, Peter gives some "beauty secrets." How does this pertain to using cosmetics, jewelry, special hairdos, etc.?

What do Peter's words say to you personally?

10. What are Christian husbands to bestow on their wives (v.7)?

Do you think the term "weaker vessel" is a "put down," and how might the women be "weaker"?

What happens for the husband who fails to honor his wife?

Which phrase shows there is no inequality in the sight of God?
