
Day 1

Learn: Pray for understanding and then read 1 Peter 2.4-10. V.3 is a quotation from Psalm 34, talking about people taking refuge in God the Father. In v.4, “him” obviously refers to Christ, and yet grammatically it refers to “Lord” in v.3, so Peter was applying to Christ, the Son of God, something from Scripture that originally was about God the Father. But we also see that they are not the same person within the godhead, because Peter says Christ is excellent and priceless to God the Father. Still in v.4, Christ is called a “living stone,” perhaps reflecting his resurrection back to life. But the word translated “living” can also mean “life-giving,” and that fits Christ too: we come to him for spiritual life, and he makes us into “living stones” [v.5]. Peter develops his motif in v.6, by quoting Isaiah 28.16. Isaiah talked about the judgment coming on the nation, but God said he would place a cornerstone in Zion [which is in Jerusalem] and those who believed in it would escape judgment. Christ is this cornerstone – the foundation of what God is building – and those of us who put our faith in him – regardless of any present suffering – can trust in our ultimate deliverance out of God’s judgment. This continues Peter’s teaching from the previous chapter, that suffering is not a sign of divine abandonment if you have come to faith in Christ.

Reflect: Peter uses numerous Old Testament quotations and allusions to make his points about Christ. It should be inspiring to realize that God’s revelation in Scripture is integrated, cohesive, and consistent. God allowed the prophets to reveal some things about Christ hundreds of years before Jesus was born, to teach the Jews about the Messiah [which, along with “Christ,” refers to God’s Anointed One] and to prepare the way for all people to understand that salvation is found only by faith in Christ. Christ is the cornerstone: without faith in him, we are not a part of what God is doing, we are not connected to God in relationship, and we are not free from the guilt of our sins. Reflect prayerfully on your need for a savior and your appreciation of God’s grace.

Day 2

Learn: Pray for understanding and then read 1 Peter 2.7-8. Christ largely was rejected by mankind [v.4], he is the cornerstone which the human “builders” rejected [v.7]. The latter comment is a quotation from Psalm 118.22. In that Psalm, it was the nations outside of Israel who rejected God’s cornerstone. In Jewish tradition before Jesus was born, the cornerstone was understood to represent the promised Messiah-deliverer from God. When Peter spoke to the Jews at Pentecost, he explained that Jesus was the Messiah [Christ] and he quoted Psalm 118.22 to say they had rejected the Messiah by crucifying Jesus, so they needed to repent and put their faith in Jesus if they wanted salvation [Acts 4.8-12]. Jesus already had identified himself as this cornerstone [Matthew 21.42-44], and judged the religious leaders of his day for trying to “construct a building” for God without the true Messiah [see also Romans 9.32-33].

Christ is a “stumbling stone” and “rock of offense” to those who do not believe in him [vv.7-8]. This is a quotation from Isaiah 8.14, in which God is seen as a sanctuary for those who fear and trust in him instead of the nations, but a source of judgment for those who do not rely on him in faith. Again, Peter applied to Christ what was once thought to refer only to God the Father. Christ is not only the cornerstone of what God is building among the faithful, but he is a source of stumbling for those who reject him. Indeed, to reject Christ and his gospel is to stumble and sin, and to accept judgment for all your sin. In v.8, to disobey the “Word” probably means to reject the gospel, based on the terminology used elsewhere in the letter [see 1 Peter 3.1; 4.17]. God determines the ultimate destiny of those who come to faith in Christ and of those who do not. This is part of God’s judgment on mankind. We are responsible to choose faith in God through Christ, even though we are not able to do so without divine empowerment, just as we are responsible to choose to be righteous even though we are born with a corrupted human nature due to the sins of our ancestors. All of mankind deserves judgment and condemnation; the miracle is that God chooses to save any of us.

Reflect: Peter’s readers were facing persecution from non-believers, but Peter assured them that they were destined for salvation while the non-believing persecutors would face God’s judgment. We too should find this reassuring. We might face hardship because of our faith today, including persecution in our workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and even families, but this is not due to fault of our own, but rather to the stumbling non-believers experience as they encounter Christ in us. Thinking about Christ and his righteousness provokes them, and they respond with hostility. Remember to keep Christ as your refuge, and to help others see the need to come to faith in him. Since we cannot know which people will respond to the gospel, how widely should we share the gospel? If you get persecuted for your faith, how can you take refuge in Christ? If you are never persecuted for your faith, does that suggest you might try being a little bolder in sharing the gospel and living out your moral beliefs in the world?

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read 1 Peter 2.4-7. When we come to Christ [v.4], he makes us into living stones [v.5], whose destinies are irrevocably tied to his and who take on his nature of sanctified and resurrected life. We become part of God's building project, stones God uses to build his church, the spiritual house [v.5; see also Ephesians 2.19-22]. The church community is the new temple, with the Holy Spirit residing in us and true worship being offered by a holy people [v.5]. Note Peter did not say that we are *individual* temples! We *collectively* are the new temple for God. We each are a part of the structure; thus we must participate in the church to be a part of what God is building. Those of us who put our faith in Christ have honor [v.7 (ESV); some translations say we see the value of Christ instead of having honor] and will not be disappointed or shamed [v.6]. In part, this means we can trust in our deliverance by Christ. Also, as Peter has already taught, suffering is not shameful or a cause to feel guilty, rather it is an honor to suffer for our faith. And, while we might be alienated from our secular cultural community because of our faith, we are part of another, better, community in the church which God is building. Notice that the purpose of this new temple is for offering spiritual sacrifices [v.5]. Peter does not define what he means, but probably spiritual sacrifices are given by living out the sanctified life, offering words of praise and sacrificially obeying God, including the positive commands about showing love within the community of the church and sharing the gospel outside.

Reflect: Do you view your faith as personal and private or do you see that one important aspect of it is communal? How active are you in the church, do you attend regularly, worship passionately, learn and apply what they teach, and involve yourself in their ministry? What steps could you take to better integrate your life with the church? How can you take the spiritual nature of the church out into the rest of your life?

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read 1 Peter 2.9. Peter calls the group of believers four things in rapid succession. A "chosen race" [or people] reflects what God said about Israel in Isaiah 43.20-21. In that chapter, God is forming a people who proclaim his praises, and God will be their only savior who will deliver them out of exile. Peter says believers are a new race in Christ, transcending traditional nationalities and skin colors. We are all one together in the church, but we also are one distinct from the world. And just as in Isaiah 43, God's purpose in forming this race of people is so we will proclaim his praises, or virtues. A "royal priesthood," "holy nation," and "people for God's possession" all reflect Exodus 19.5-6. As with ancient Israel, if we keep our covenant with God [now the New Covenant, which replaced the Mosaic Covenant], we will be God's representatives to the people groups outside the church. We are to be holy, set out for God's purposes and obediently living sanctified lives; we are to be a priesthood, mediating God's blessings to people who do not yet know him; and we are to be God's own, intimately walking with him every minute. Peter's choice of terms is interesting: when God inaugurated the holy nation of Israel, he initiated a blood covenant [Exodus 24]; Peter brings that idea together with Christ inaugurating the New Covenant with his blood [Luke 22.20], when he calls the church a holy nation. As with Israel, the fact that each person is to represent God does not preclude the need for spiritual leaders among us.

Reflect: Do you think God is satisfied with your effort to proclaim his virtues to those who do not yet know him? What about how well you proclaim his praises in daily worship or in church worship times? How could you improve in these two ways of fulfilling your purpose for God? Do you find any other aspect of this verse thought-provoking?

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read 1 Peter 2.4-10. Peter reminds us that we praise God inside and outside the church because he brought us from the darkness into his light [v.9]. This refers to our "conversion" when we accepted Christ in faith, and thus were forgiven of our sins, declared righteous in God's sight, made alive spiritually, and set apart for God's purposes [you can see similar terminology about darkness and light in Acts 26.18; 2 Corinthians 4.6; 1 Thessalonians 5.4-8; Ephesians 5.8]. In v.10, Peter again turns to the Old Testament, alluding to Hosea 1.6-9; 2.23. In Hosea, these words refer to God restoring his people after their failure to obey the covenant and subsequent destruction and exile, when God extended mercy to them again, and again gathered them to be his people. Gentiles [non-Jews] were even more firmly in the darkness, not deserving or receiving God's mercy or inclusion; but through the gospel of Christ, we now all can receive God's mercy and be included in his people.

Reflect: Reflect on what a gift you have been given to be mercifully forgiven for your sins and mercifully included by grace in God's own possession, his holy nation and royal priesthood! Praise and thank God each day for these gifts! Pray about how you can help others understand their need for these gifts or to appreciate them if they have already accepted Christ in faith. How can you continue to shine God's light and sing his praises?