

EXPOSITION OF I PETER

Message #7

I Peter 2:4-10

I think all of us at one point or another have heard that the primary purpose of the church is to evangelize the world. As a result, some churches run massive evangelistic programs and various outreach activities and even buy a fleet of buses in order to try to make that happen. I will be the first to acknowledge that part of our responsibility is to evangelize the lost. That is certainly something we see in this very context. After all, the Apostle Paul told Timothy in his final letter to “do the work of an evangelist.” However, when you come to this section of Scripture it is quite apparent that Peter saw things slightly different. Peter did not believe that the primary goal of the church was evangelism. **He believed the primary goal was to build up God’s people to the point that they became a reflection of a royal priesthood. He believed the primary goal of the church was to build up God’s people, not to cater to those who aren’t God’s people.**

In fact, two key points you see right here in I Peter are: 1) At the moment one believes on Jesus Christ he is part of the living body of Jesus Christ; 2) The church is to be a place that offers a holy temple type of spirituality, filled with priests who offer priestly sacrifices to God. Now Peter’s main point is found in **verse 5**:

GOD’S PEOPLE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING BUILT UP BY GOD INTO A STRONG SPIRITUAL HOUSEHOLD COMPRISED OF LIVING STONES WHO OFFER PRAISE TO HIM AND HOPE FOR THE LOST.

If we keep in mind that the believers to whom Peter is writing are suffering and hurting, we may conclude that God will use all things, including negative things, to build us up into becoming a strong believer. God will use positives and negatives, good times and bad times to develop His people. He will use times of prosperity and times of poverty, times of serenity and times of adversity. God wants His church strong and He is in the process of building it up to be just that.

Now as we look down through these verses there are two main groups that Peter discusses:

Group #1 - Those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ.

For this group Peter uses the pronoun “you” (2:5, 7, 9, 10).

Group #2 - Those who have not come to faith in Jesus Christ.

For this group Peter uses the pronouns “those” and “they” (2:7, 8).

The purpose of Peter doing this is to contrast the believer with the unbeliever to show the wonderful riches the believer has as opposed to the unbeliever who is headed to doom. When one is suffering, one can look at the unbeliever and think he is the one who really has the great life. In all reality, the unbeliever has a life of total gloom.

Now before we get into the analysis of all of this amazing text, we may notice that **the whole issue of any relationship with God centers on a relationship with Jesus Christ (2:4, 5).**

This is where Peter begins. As Dr. Clowney says Peter always “begins with the Lord” (*The Message of I Peter*, p. 83). Peter did not believe as the Catholic Church teaches, that he was the rock upon whom the Church is built, Jesus Christ is!

According to **verse 4**, **Jesus Christ is the living stone** - He had once been killed, but was raised from the dead. **Jesus Christ is the chosen stone**, the only One chosen by God who can appease His wrath and make it possible for sinners to be saved. **Jesus Christ is the precious stone**; this is how God views His Son and His work. So our connection to God must go, just as Peter says in **verse 5**, “through Him.” Life with God comes from a connection we have with Jesus Christ and that connection is by faith. The precious value that we have is because we are connected to the valuable Son of God. Our status is connected to His status. Without Him, we have no status with God. It is because of our connection to Him that we may be built up to become a strong spiritual household.

Now I want to break the information down into two main categories:

CATEGORY #1 – Key encouraging truth concerning the believer .

We need to remember that the Roman government considered Christians to be second class citizens. They could work the land, but they could not own land. They were forced to pay taxes, but they could not vote or hold public office. Christians were considered to be nothing in the sight of the Roman world, but Peter wanted them to know it was completely different in God’s world. This is one of the richest portraits of a believer you will see in the entire Bible.

These are things we are or things that are happening now.

Fact #1 - We are built up by coming to Christ. **2:4-5**

We are not torn down by coming to faith in Jesus Christ; we begin the greatest building project of our entire life. You will never be much of anything until you yield your life to Jesus Christ. Once you come to faith in Christ your building process begins. Christ begins to build your character, your quirky personality and your life. You begin to have meaning, value, joy and hope. Life becomes fulfilling and begins to make sense. The building of you starts when you yield to Jesus Christ.

Fact #2 - We are a living stone connected to Christ. **2:5a**

Stones typically are not alive, but we are alive because of our connection to Jesus Christ. At one time we were dead in our sins, but God reached into our depraved heart of stone and put life into it. God views us as alive once we come to faith in Christ. Prior to that we are dead. No one is alive to God by their works, religion, church membership or their money or sacrifices. One is only alive by faith in Jesus Christ.

Fact #3 - We are being built up to form a spiritual household. **2:5b**

Now Peter was actually writing to believers who were scattered over five named provinces (I Peter 1:1). Peter says, God is forming one spiritual house with all of you. It takes all to make the family and so it is with God's family; it takes every believer to form it. You are part of something very sacred and very big the moment you believe. It is the greatest membership you can ever have to be part of God's spiritual household.

Fact #4 - We are being built up into a holy priesthood. **2:5c**

Don't miss this point; **we are God's holy priesthood**. We are it. Every believer is a priest unto God. The priesthood concept comes from the O.T. and seems to have to do with both sacred privilege and sacred responsibility. We are to become a reflection of priestly holiness and royalty. We should live our lives as a holy priest living in the holy temple. We cannot become a society that reflects God's grace without a priestly piety that reflects God's grace.

Fact #5 - We are being built up to offer spiritual sacrifices. **2:5d**

The primary responsibility of O.T. priests was to offer up some type of physical sacrifice, most of which were animal sacrifices designed to point one to Christ's ultimate sacrifice. Now notice we are being built up to offer spiritual sacrifices for God. We have the privilege of offering acceptable sacrifices to God. Some of the sacrifices we have the privilege of offering is ourselves (Romans 12:1). We start to become very priestly, when we offer to God ourselves; that is our intellect, emotions and our will. We may also offer the sacrifice of our financial support of ministry (Philippians 4:18); our praise and thanksgiving (Hebrews 13:15); and we offer our prayers (Revelation 8:3). These spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ and He views them as sacred.

Fact #6 - We who believe in Jesus Christ will never be disappointed. **2:6**

The word "disappointed" is one that means you place your hope or confidence in something and then you have your hopes dashed. That will never happen to those who have believed on Jesus Christ. You will never be disappointed or have your hopes dashed.

Fact #7 - We are a chosen race. **2:9a**

This description parallels God's description of Israel (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:6). Christ is a chosen stone and so are we. Many times we say "I chose to come to Christ," but proper theology says God did the choosing. People don't like this doctrine of election because it gives God all the glory. It smashes human pride. It exalts God. **The wonder of this precious doctrine of election as John Stott said is not that God chose some and not others, it is that God chose any.** No matter what your pedigree or family background, if you know Jesus Christ, God chose you to be part of His family. He handpicked you. This doctrine gives you humility, joy and hope.

Fact #8 - We are a royal priesthood. **2:9b**

We are not just a bunch of random stones; we are a royal priesthood put together by God. We are royal priests of our royal King. We are all priest, every single one of us. We do not all have the same spiritual gifts and same ministries, but we are all priests.

Fact #9 - We are a holy nation. **2:9c**

Think of this, Israel was never classified as a holy nation, but we are because we have the righteousness of God in us. God views us as totally set apart unto Him. We are His nation. We have been declared holy by God and are already righteous in His sight because of our connection to Jesus Christ.

Fact #10 - We are God's own possession. **2:9d**

We are "a people for God's own possession." To God you are His most valuable possession. He paid a very high price for you. There is an English Bible that misses the true interpretation of the Greek and says "a peculiar people." Some Christians apparently took that translation to heart because some did their best to live as a peculiar oddball, doing and saying weird things. But the actual Greek does not read this way at all in either the UBS Greek Text or the Textus Receptus Greek Text. Both read in Greek "λαος εις περιποιησιν" - literally "a people for one's self or one's possession." **The meaning is not that you are odd or peculiar; it is that you are God's special property and you have God's special care.** If people tamper with you, they are tampering with the property of God.

We are all of these things and it is our responsibility to proclaim these things. It is our job to proclaim these praiseworthy truths. We are obligated to tell others of God's wonderful work in choosing us. We are supposed to be heralding praise to God for electing us. It is our job to praise God for election, not to debate with God about election. He has chosen us from all the people of the world and has made us His own property.

Fact #11 - We have been called out of darkness into God's light. **2:9e**

He called us out of darkness; we did not call ourselves out of it. There are three kinds of darkness this world faces when it comes to God: 1) spiritual darkness - we are born with a dark sin nature that is alienated from God; 2) intellectual darkness - we have dark depraved minds that are not subject to God and 3) moral darkness - we have all done things that were morally dark and depraved. We all lived in this dark sphere until God called us out of it. There was nothing about us that was worthy of God choosing us, we were in dark, depraved sin and He chose us to become His family and even His holy priests. There was nothing in us that merited the Grace of God. He, as Dr. Swindoll said, "quarried you from the pit of your sin" and He has made us part of His eternal building project. God's light lets you see yourself for what you really are.

Fact #12 - We were not previously the people of God. **2:10a**

We were not initially connected to God, Israel was. Don't miss this truth. You once were not God's people and if you haven't trusted Jesus Christ you still aren't. You are not born into a right relationship with God, you are not born right with God; you need to be born again.

Fact #13 - We are now the people of God. **2:10b**

God has made us His people. God looked down through time and He saw you and He came after you and He made you His child. He made you His people, His family, His priests.

Fact #14 - We had not previously received God's mercy. **2:10c**

People need to see themselves truthfully to be right with God as those who need God's mercy. They must see themselves as hopeless and helpless in their relationship with God.

Fact #15 - We have now received God's mercy. **2:10d**

God saw us as helpless, hopeless, dark, depraved sinners and He came after us and saved us. He made us His people and then He elevated us into the status of being His own priests.

You want self-esteem? Here it is. The highest you can possibly have.

CATEGORY #2 – Key warning truth concerning the unbeliever. **2:7-8**

But for the unbeliever the status is not the same.

Fact #1 - The unbeliever rejects Jesus Christ the living stone. **2:4, 7**

Notice carefully from **verse 7** that rejection is a matter of belief, not works. Twice a year, in my opinion, the most hypocritical thing happens in the world of religion. People celebrate the birthday of Jesus on Christmas and the resurrection of Jesus on Easter. Many of these same people refuse to believe in Him as their only personal Savior. Here is hypocrisy at the ultimate level - reject the very person you are supposedly celebrating. The participle "rejected" is perfect tense, which means this is past time point action with continuing results now and in the future. This particular word carries with it the idea of examining or testing data pertaining to Jesus Christ and then to move away from the evidence and refusing to believe in Him. When a person is presented the Gospel, he must see himself as a sinner who needs a Savior. At that point one either believes in Jesus Christ as his or her only Savior or moves away from the truth. That rejection starts at some point and continues on right into eternity.

Fact #2 - The unbeliever stumbles over Jesus Christ because He is an offense to them.

This sits in the context of Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. As the chief cornerstone He is kicked aside and rejected. Just as it would be insane to get rid of your chief cornerstone in a building, so it is eternally insane to reject Jesus Christ. Don't lose sight of this - those who reject Jesus Christ find His grace offer offensive. The Gospel of pure grace to a religious works world is offensive. Most people would rather rely on themselves than on Jesus Christ. Most would rather rely on their works rather than His work.

Fact #3 - The unbeliever is disobedient to God's Word.

The actual word "disobedient" (v. 8) means to refuse to be persuaded in spite of the facts or evidence. Make no mistake about this; one who does not believe in Jesus Christ is disobedient to the living Word and the written Word. This is not a matter of lack of evidence concerning truth; it is a rejection of the evidence. You have no meaning, no salvation, no hope. You aren't part of anything except living your life waiting for it to end.

Fact #4 - The unbeliever is doomed by Divine appointment.

There is the conclusion of the unbeliever doomed from all eternity past. You'll not get any help from God and you have no hope when you die. You are appointed to doom.

You are in one of these two categories today - believer or unbeliever. If you are a believer you are rich, but if you are not a believer you are doomed.