



# BUILDING OUR FAITH

Believers mature both personally and as a community through God's grace.

## 1 PETER 2:1-10

<sup>1</sup> So rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn infants, desire the pure spiritual milk, so that you may grow by it for your salvation, <sup>3</sup> since you have tasted that the Lord is good. <sup>4</sup> Coming to Him, a living stone—rejected by men but chosen and valuable to God— <sup>5</sup> you yourselves, as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For it is contained in Scripture: Look! I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and honored cornerstone, and the one who believes in Him will never be put to shame! <sup>7</sup> So honor will come to you



who believe, but for the unbelieving, The stone that the builders rejected—this One has become the cornerstone,<sup>8</sup> and A stone to stumble over, and a rock to trip over. They stumble because they disobey the message; they were destined for this.<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.<sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

*Notice how believers are described in this passage. Compare those descriptions with the descriptions used for Jesus. Look for ways the descriptions of believers are tied to the descriptions of Jesus.*

---

---

## FIRST THOUGHTS

Building a house can be a trying time for families. A foundation requires much work before a house can be built on top of it. The owners wonder if the house will ever get built as day after day they drive by and see no structure arising. When the foundation is finally poured, the owners almost always look at it and panic. It’s too small! Did we make it big enough? The foundation always looks small until the walls begin to ascend. When the house does ascend, the owners face a series of choices. What color should the walls be? What color should the carpet be? Decision after decision confronts the owners of the house, but these are important decisions because in the end they determine what the house will become. The foundation determines the capability of the house, but the ensuing decisions determine its beauty.

***What decisions might an owner face when building a house? Which decisions do you think carry the biggest weight?***

---

---

Building a house parallels some of the struggles of spiritual growth. The foundation of both a house and a spiritual life are crucial. Problems in the foundation will result in a poor structure above it. Spiritual growth may seem so much slower than the new Christian would like it to be. It is easy to get frustrated with one's own growth. We expect too much too soon in our lives and forget our lives are a product of our day-to-day decisions. Sometimes we forget that, like a house, it takes a group effort to raise up the finished product. One person does not do all the electrical, plumbing, painting, and other crafts it takes to finish the building. As Christians, we too grow in the context of a Christian community.

### **KEY DOCTRINE:** *Sanctification*

Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

## **UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT**

### **1 PETER 2:1-10**

Peter was writing to Christians in Asia Minor facing persecution. He reminded them of the living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3). They needed to readdress the foundation of their Christian walk. The apostle also encouraged them to address the structure being built on that foundation. He called them to live holy lives, to live in reverence for God, and to love others with a love like God's (vv. 13-25).

With the foundation in place and the structure ascending, Peter encouraged the believers to press on to maturity in Christ. They had entered a dark period of suffering that would only grow stronger as localized persecution turned to empire-wide persecution. Christianity was not for the weak at heart.

Peter used three images to describe the type of maturity he hoped to witness in these Christians. First, he longed for them to desire pure spiritual milk rather than a substitute formula. The only way they could grow was by receiving proper nourishment. Second, he called on the church to recognize each member was a living stone being built into a spiritual house. One stone by itself



would not make a building, so the Christians needed to learn the power of community. Third, he reminded the Christians of who they were in Christ. They were a spiritual people created to proclaim praise to the Lord. The persecution they faced would not stamp out their faith but rather would highlight the strength of the Lord in them.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### SPIRITUAL MILK (1 PET. 2:1-3)

#### VERSE 1

**<sup>1</sup> So rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander.**

Peter was more concerned with helping believers endure their trials than with explaining their trials. Therefore, he first encouraged the persecuted Christians to *rid* themselves of attitudes and actions unbecoming of believers.

First, they were to rid themselves of *all malice*. Peter had previously encouraged the Christians to be known by their sincere love (1:22), and this could not happen if they held malice in their hearts. Malice is an attitude that resembles hatred and desires to reach out to inflict pain on others. The Christians could have easily developed this attitude toward those who were persecuting them, but maturity demanded a stronger response to their suffering.

Second, Christians were to avoid *deceit*. This refers to deliberate dishonesty. Christians who took a stand for Christ were persecuted, and the temptation probably was strong for them to deceive those who were persecuting them.

*Hypocrisy* also threatened the Christian community. Originally the word *hypocrisy* referred to an actor who played a part but concealed his real identity. In that day actors would often wear a mask, concealing their true identities. Peter did not want Christians cowering under the threat of persecution. He wanted people who would live honestly and openly for Christ.

Peter also encouraged them to avoid *envy* and *slander*. Perhaps the Christians were tempted to be envious of the power exhibited by their persecutors. *Slander* is cutting down others in speech. Perhaps the believers slandered those who persecuted them.

***How do the attitudes and actions listed by Peter get in the way of spiritual growth?***

---

---

## **VERSE 2**

**<sup>2</sup> Like newborn infants, desire the pure spiritual milk, so that you may grow by it for your salvation,**

Some people may think Peter's reference to *newborn infants* indicates the Christians in Asia Minor were immature Christians. This is not necessarily the case. The point of Peter's metaphor was that all Christians need *pure spiritual milk* that allows them to grow. Whether mature or immature, the Christian needs the same food source. The word *desire* is a strong word that could also be translated "crave." It denotes an intense personal desire. Anyone who has ever seen a newborn baby longing for milk knows the intensity of that desire.

People desire many things—some things that are good for them and some that are bad for them. Peter encouraged believers to desire milk, but not just any milk. He described this milk in two ways. First, it is *pure* milk. This is a milk free from impurities. Contaminated milk will not produce maturity in the believer. Watered-down milk falls short of the nourishment needed to grow. The milk also needs to be *spiritual*. Usually in Greek literature this word (*logikos*) meant "what is rational or reasonable." It comes from the same word used for the Word of God and Jesus the living Word (*logos*). This is an indication that the pure milk believers should desire is the Word of God.

## **VERSE 3**

**<sup>3</sup> since you have tasted that the Lord is good.**

Peter alluded to Psalm 34:8 in this verse. He reminded believers that they had *tasted that the Lord is good*. One taste of the Lord will create a yearning for more. The theme of Psalm 34 was the suffering of the righteous, which may indicate why Peter alluded to this particular psalm. Peter used the Word of God to encourage persecuted believers in Asia Minor to long for the pure, unadulterated Word of God.



What may have appeared in verse 1 of this chapter to be mere moralism changes in verses 2-3. The believers were to rid themselves of bad attitudes and actions not simply to fulfill some requirement. They had tasted the goodness of God and were now to live in light of that goodness. They needed to continue nourishing themselves with the Word of God so they could press on to maturity and fulfill their purpose in suffering.

***How would you explain the importance of proper spiritual nourishment? What would you include as a balanced spiritual diet for the believer?***

---

---

## **SPIRITUAL HOUSE** (1 PET. 2:4-8)

### **VERSES 4-5**

**<sup>4</sup> Coming to Him, a living stone—rejected by men but chosen and valuable to God— <sup>5</sup> you yourselves, as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

Shifting metaphors, Peter turned from newborn babes craving spiritual milk to living stones being built into a spiritual building. As Christians, they had come to Christ, who was the *living stone*. Jesus had experienced rejection by the people He came to save, but He was *chosen* by God and *valuable* to Him. The Christians in Asia Minor also had experienced rejection, but God was using them as *living stones* to build *a spiritual house*.

Just as Jesus is *a living stone*, so too are those who follow Him. All those who come to Him for salvation become a part of a building program. As verse 6 will state, Christ is the cornerstone for the building, but the other stones are important in building that spiritual house. We would do well to remember that the Christian life must be lived in community. We are not solitary stones unto ourselves but rather a part of what God is building.

What is the purpose of this spiritual house? God is building a spiritual house where a holy priesthood will offer worship *acceptable to God*. What worship is acceptable to Him? He accepts worship that comes *through Jesus Christ*, the cornerstone. Everything in the church is built upon Jesus and is for Jesus' praise.

**What role does a church and its members play in the development of a follower of Christ?**

---

---

#### VERSE 6

**<sup>6</sup> For it is contained in Scripture: Look! I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and honored cornerstone, and the one who believes in Him will never be put to shame!**

Peter quoted Isaiah 28:16 to reinforce his declaration that Christ is the *cornerstone* of the house that God is building. At great cost, the cornerstone was laid in place *in •Zion* (see p. 6), and it is the foundation on which everything else rests. By citing the prophet Isaiah, Peter demonstrated how this was God's plan from the beginning.

Because Peter's readers experienced rejection and suffering, they may have been tempted to think God was rejecting them. The truth was actually just the opposite. Their rejection was a sign that they, like Jesus, were included in the plan of God as He built a spiritual temple of people who would worship Him. Do not confuse trials with the absence of God's presence.

#### VERSES 7-8

**<sup>7</sup> So honor will come to you who believe, but for the unbelieving, The stone that the builders rejected—this One has become the cornerstone, <sup>8</sup> and A stone to stumble over, and a rock to trip over. They stumble because they disobey the message; they were destined for this.**

Since God had not rejected the suffering Christians in Asia Minor, why were they enduring such persecution? Peter affirmed that one day those who believed in Christ would be honored, but those who rejected Him would be punished. He quoted Psalm 118:22 to demonstrate that Christ had suffered, and yet God had honored His faithfulness. *The stone that the builders rejected* became *the cornerstone*. If Christ had suffered and yet received honor, that outcome would also happen for those who followed Him.

Then Peter alluded to Isaiah 8:14, where the disobedient stumbled over the stone that should have saved them. Rather than fearing those who were persecuting them, the Christians



in Asia Minor should have felt a measure of sorrow for their persecutors who were stumbling over the message of Christ.

One difficulty in the passage is interpreting the last part of verse 8. What did it mean that *they were destined for this*? What was destined in this verse? Was it the unbelief of man or the stumbling as a result of unbelief? Either way, it is important to affirm that God never exempts human beings from responsibility for their own sin (see Rom. 9:14-23). For example, Peter indicted those who crucified Christ, even though the crucifixion was ordained by God (Acts 2:23). Both divine sovereignty and human responsibility are found here in this passage as well.

***How does knowing that Jesus was rejected by some give believers courage to face persecution and rejection? Should believers expect to be treated differently by those who reject Jesus? Explain.***

---

---

## **SPIRITUAL PEOPLE** (1 PET. 2:9-10)

### **VERSE 9**

**<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.**

Peter painted a contrast between Christians and unbelievers. In the previous verses, he described how unbelievers stumble over Jesus, the chief cornerstone. But Christians enjoy an exalted position. Peter described believers in four powerful images. They are part of *a chosen race*. The Israelite understanding that they alone were God's chosen people has now been broadly expanded. Peter used Exodus 19:6 to draw upon the imagery of a *royal priesthood*, another term that originally applied to Israel. Like God had built the nation of Israel, He was rebuilding a new community in the church. Peter also called the Christians *a holy nation*. This expression also came from Exodus 19:6 and originally referred to Israel. The final expression, *a people for His possession*, may be a reference to Malachi 3:17, where it referred to those who respond to the Lord's rebuke and desire to live righteously.

But what is the purpose of these exalted titles for Christians? Are we exalted to bring glory to ourselves? Peter squelched any such thinking by reminding his audience they were created to *proclaim the praises of the One who called* them from *darkness* to *light*. In Isaiah 43:21, the prophet reminded God's people that they were created to recount the praises of God. Peter reminds us that God created us for the same reason. This would include both worship and evangelism. We have been called to testify to the way God has taken us from darkness to light so others might hear the gospel and turn to Christ.

***What is the relationship between worship and evangelism?***

---

---

**BIBLE SKILL:** *Memorize a verse and apply it to a real-life situation.*

Memorize 1 Peter 2:10 in your preferred Bible translation. Then write the verse in your own words. Finally, write a couple of sentences, stating how this verse can help you understand your identity in Christ, both for this life and for eternity.

**VERSE 10**

**<sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

Alluding to the words of Hosea 2:23, Peter recounted a time in the lives of the Christians when they *were not a people*. For the most part, Israel had rejected the Savior God sent through them. God had now created a new people, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, who would declare God's praises to the nations. The churches that Peter wrote to were mostly made up of Gentiles who had been living in darkness, but by the mercy of God *now* were *God's people*.

***How does the gospel break down walls between people?***

---

---



## IN MY CONTEXT

We are to crave the spiritual food that leads to maturity. As members of God's family, believers are to serve God in a way that pleases Him. Believers are to declare to others what God has done and is doing.

***List ways you are feeding on God's Word. What do you need to do to consume God's Word more diligently—reading, studying, and reflecting on its truth?***

---

---

***Evaluate the progress of your spiritual life. How are you growing in your relationship with the Lord? What areas need more attention? List actions you will take to foster your spiritual growth.***

---

---

***Discuss with the group why belonging to a church and a Bible study group is important when it comes to declaring the praises of God to others. Determine steps the group can take to encourage each other to be more consistent in sharing with others.***

---

---

## MEMORY VERSE

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. —1 Peter 2:10