

A Study of First Peter

Knowing Who We are in Christ (1 Peter 2:1-10)

“The Scripture is both the breeder and feeder of grace. How is the convert born, but by ‘the word of truth’? (James 1:18). How doth he grow, but by ‘the sincere milk of the Word.’? (1 Peter 2:2).”
~ Thomas Watson

I. An Introduction

In this section, Peter continues to expound upon who we are in Christ and the implications this truth bears upon our lives. In particular, the apostle addresses our identity as true believers. Through the use of several Old Testament texts, Peter highlights how our identity as believers is shaped by the Scriptures and established in Christ. In so doing, Peter encourages us to live as holy people who glorify the Lord in an unbelieving world.

II. Knowing Our True Identity as Believers (2:1-10)

A. Identity Found in the Word - *the Bible* (2:1-3)

v. 1 - As believers who are called to love one another (1:22), we are called to put away evil attitudes and actions. As aptly noted by one commentator, “The sins listed [in this verse] tear at the social fabric of the church, ripping away threads of love that keep them together” (Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 98). Note the contrast between love and this list of sins:

Traits of Love	Traits of Ungodliness
caring for one another	<i>malice</i> : ill-will toward one another
genuineness and sincerity	<i>deceit & hypocrisy</i> : disingenuousness and false pretense
desiring the best for one another	<i>envy</i> : preference for the advancement of oneself, even at the expense of others
finding the good in others, avoiding gossip	<i>slander</i> : spreading lies about others and disparaging others

v. 2 - Believers are to long for the “pure spiritual milk”. While scholars debate the identity of this “milk,” it would seem that the best reference is the written Word of God. The basis for this interpretation is as follows:

- Peter just referred to the Word in 1:23.
- The previous reference to the Word as “living” supports this idea of nourishment.
- The “purity” of Scripture is frequently highlighted in the Old Testament (Ps 12:6; 18:8; 119:96).

- The same Greek word for “longing” is used twice in the Old Testament concerning one’s longing for God’s Word (Psalm 119:20, 131).
- The term “spiritual” can often convey that which is “rational”. Indeed, the means by which we are sanctified, or grow spiritually, is through our minds—minds that are informed, sustained, and transformed by God’s Word.

v. 3 - Not only is this longing for God’s Word essential for spiritual growth, this passion also allows the believer to enjoy personal fellowship with the Lord. The context of the quoted psalm (Psalm 34), includes encouragement for God’s people who are suffering. David pens Psalm 34 to praise God for delivering him from all “his sojournings”—a beautiful reminder to the recipients of 1 Peter.

B. Identity Found in the Word - *Jesus Christ* (2:4-10)

v. 4 - Drawing upon Psalm 118:22, Peter contrasts human rejection of Christ with God’s election of His Son.

v. 5 - Followers of Jesus are also seen as living stones. The combined use of the imagery of the “house” and our role as priests can be difficult to follow. However, one scholar rightly calls for us to imagine an amorphous building rather than a rectangle building. He writes, “The beauty of this new and living ‘temple made of people’ should no longer be expensive gold and precious jewels, but the imperishable beauty of holiness and faith in Christians’ lives, qualities which much more effectively reflect the glory of God” (Grudem, *1 Peter*, 105).

What are these spiritual sacrifices? Based upon 1 Peter and the rest of the New Testament, these sacrifices include praise, thanksgiving and doing good. These offerings are not to atone for our sin, as Christ paid our debt, once and for all, but rather, these offerings are expressions of thanksgiving and communion with God (e.g., Lev 1-2).

Of the 12 quotations from the Old Testament in 1 Peter, half of these references are from the book of Isaiah. Thus, it should come as no surprise that this prophetic book serves as a significant source for Peter’s theology. An explicit example of this truth can be seen in this section. Peter cites both Isaiah 28:16 and then Isaiah 8:15 to support his Christology, and secondarily, to expound upon his doctrine of the church. Observe the following:

- *The first citation stems from Isaiah 28:16.* This text highlights that it was God’s plan and purpose for people to believe in Jesus—the Foundation Stone. Christ is the sole means for acceptance before a holy God. The preciousness of the cornerstone is because of the precious blood of Christ that brought redemption (1:18-19).
- *The second Old Testament reference included is Isaiah 8:15.* The context of this Old Testament passage is the judgment of God upon those who do not believe. How one responds to this “stone” determines the outcome (i.e., honor or shame). Observe that the “stumbling” of unbelievers was not accidental; it was from intentional disobedience!

“In applying these Isaiah texts to Jesus, Peter upholds his previously stated principle that the prophets earnestly sought after and wrote down the good news about the Christ (1:10-12). His reference to Christ as the cornerstone of Isaiah 28:16 shows that it was God’s plan and purpose for people to believe in Jesus.” (Williams, “The Place of Isaiah,” *RTJ* 66.1 [2007], 52).

v. 8 - Did the Lord predestine individuals for disobedience and ultimate judgment? Nothing in Scripture suggests that God has foreordained some to life and the rest to destruction (note 2 Peter 3:9). Instead, this passage seems to suggest that the disobedience of these unbelievers, speaking collectively, results in their destiny—that is, to stumble.

w. 9-10 - Peter then identifies those who believe in Jesus:

- *A chosen race*: Twice the term “chosen” was used of Christ. It is now used of the saints.
- *A royal priesthood & holy nation*: Both phrases are quoted from Exodus 19:6, where God promises this status to Israel who keeps His covenant. The church does not replace Israel; but the church, comprised of both Jews and Gentiles, enjoys a unique status as God’s people during this time in history.
- *A people of His own*: Literally, we are a people for His possession (see Exod 19:5; Isa 43:21; Mal 3:17).

Such a calling is so that we might praise Him (Isa 43:7). How exactly do we, as believers, declare the Lord’s praises?

v. 10 - Based upon Hosea 1:6, 9-10 and 2:23 (also, see Rom 9:25-26), Peter reminds these believers of their calling and that they are recipients of God’s mercy, which includes His care and concern.

III. Intersect

Theologian Wayne Grudem stated that “Redemption is ultimately not man-centered but God-centered” (*1 Peter*, 119). Indeed, our salvation is solely for God’s glory. Realizing this theological truth, take some time this week doing the following:

1. Spend time each day this next week praising the Lord for your salvation. Rehearse the truths of 1 Peter 2:9-10.
2. Share with at least one person how grateful you are to the Lord for your salvation.

“The major strategy of Satan is to distort the character of God and the truth of who we are. He can’t change God and he can’t do anything to change our identity and position in Christ. If, however, he can get us to believe a lie, we will live as though our identity in Christ isn’t true.” ~ Neil T. Anderson

For further thought . . .

Based upon our study this morning, you may want to spend some additional time this week reflecting on the following:

Peter lists a set of sins that we are to “put away” in 2:1. Take some time to evaluate your thoughts, speech, and actions as it relates to this list. Is there a particular relationship that has been affected by not putting away one of these sins? If so, identify at least one way in which you can improve in loving this person. Be sure to identify a plan of action that is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-sensitive.

Take some time to rewrite 2:1-3 in your own words.