

1 Peter 2

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Peter has spent more than three years traveling with Jesus. Compare that with Paul's brief encounter on the road to Damascus. Paul was God's premier apostle to the Gentiles, yet Peter knew the Gentile world, too. Growing up in Galilee, he was frequently exposed to Gentile influence. Galilee was not solidly Jewish. Towns like Sepphoris and Tiberius had ethnically diverse populations. Further, it was Peter who opened the Kingdom of God for Gentiles at Caesarea in Acts 10. Peter here is addressing a mixed audience of born-again Jews and converted Gentiles and gives them instructions on how to unify such diverse heritages.

At the end of chapter 1, Peter said his readers, including us, have been born a second time to a never-ending life. So some life-style changes need to be made right now.

(1) So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech.

A. The Category Is *Evil Behavior*

Most translations use the word *malice* here, but malice can have a narrow use or refer to evil behavior in general, so these translators have chosen to use the broad idea.

Evil behavior is elaborated on as the chapter unfolds.

B. Specific Conduct To Be Done With

- **Deceit**, trying to mislead, perhaps without directly lying. **James Smith** describes deceit:

The word comes from a root meaning “to catch with bait.” This includes all manner of falsehood — lying about ourselves or lying to others so as to gain an advantage over them.

Later in this chapter, Jesus is held up as an example:

He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone.

1 Peter 2:22.

Jesus was transparent and did not mislead others. Rather, when He told His men that He would be crucified and rise the third day, they did not believe Him.

- **Hypocrisy** is from the entertainment stage. It is role-playing: pretending we are something when we are not. Peter has just said that believers are to love one another from the heart fervently. That opens the door for hypocrisy in believers. Peter says that believers are not to be two-faced. He had experience with two-faced Ananias and Sapphira. The Lord punished them directly and before all. It put the fear of the Lord in the church! Acts 5:1-11.
- **Jealousy.** Most translators use the word *envy*. *Envy* is used in secular Greek to describe the attitude which makes one man begrudge another something which he himself desires but does not possess.
- **Unkind speech.** Words intended to cause pain to the hearers. **Unkind speech** does not fit with loving our brethren from our hearts. **Unkind speech** is fundamental to journalism today. When I'm reading an article where the writer criticizes and name-calls, I stop and look elsewhere for the information.

(2) Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, (3) now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness.

A. The New Diet

- **Peter** said earlier that his readers had been born again.



Now for what to eat. **Crave spiritual milk.** Don't just tolerate it, **crave** it. Today that would include getting the basics of the Bible in mind before tackling subjects like the Book of Revelation. Have you memorized the books of the Bible yet?

- Salvation is more than a one-time event. It is an ongoing life experience, and **spiritual milk** is what powers it.
- **Cry For This Food**

Rather than being passive, **cry out.** New believers have seen a little of the Lord's kindness, now they must insist on seeing more.

When one of our great-grand children was nearing birth, the doctor detected that he was not growing properly and recommended induced labor. When he was born, it was clear that his food supply had been restricted. He wanted food and now! He began with having two meals an hour. He longed for the pure **milk.**

The command to eat is not restricted to new believers, but is saying how all believers should be handling the milk of the word. The **milk** of the gospel nourishes the hope of eternal **salvation.**

(4) You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but He was chosen by God for great honor. (5) And you are living stones that God is building into His spiritual temple. What's more, you are His holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. (6) As the Scriptures say, "I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in Him will never be disgraced."

A. God's Spiritual Temple Described

At that time in construction, a **cornerstone** was laid and the entire building was built with reference to its position. **Christ** was the **cornerstone** of the true **temple**, but the establishment building crews **rejected** Him.

By contrast, **God** had very high **honor** for Christ. Verse 6 shows this was an ancient plan now being unfolded for all to see. About 800 years before, Isaiah 28:16:

Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem, a firm and tested stone. It is a precious cornerstone that is safe to build on. Whoever believes need never be shaken.

The Lord we serve is not a stationary **cornerstone** on a distant hill, but a **living stone** that forms part of our foundation. He is a **living** stone because He was raised from the dead to life.

B. The Role Of Believers In God's Temple

Believers are **living stones** in that Christ-based **temple**. Additionally, we are **holy priests** there, too. Even beyond that, as **priests**, we are **offering sacrifices** that **please God**, a basic aim of Christian living. Instead of sacrificing animals each day as in Old Testament Israel, we offer **spiritual sacrifices**. This may include our prayer and praise.

Since the leaders of physical Israel had rejected God's **cornerstone**, naturally they reject all of the stones in the building.

(7) Yes, you who trust Him recognize the honor God has given Him. But for those who reject Him, "The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone." (8) And, "He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they do not obey God's word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them.

A. God Has Honored Christ

The Father has honored Christ by raising Him from the grave.

He has honored Christ by sending the Spirit to expand the work of Christ worldwide.

He has honored Christ by making Him the cornerstone of this emerging building, His temple, fulfilling Psalm 118:22. (verse 7)

He has honored Christ by making Him a trip-hazard for the unbelievers at Jerusalem. Isaiah 8:14. (Verse 8)

B. There Is No Hope For The Disobedient

God did not force unbelieving Israel to stumble. They made their own choice by disobeying the word that **God** had sent through His prophets and then finally in Christ.

Their fate has been settled. Peter is writing during the A.D. 60s. In A.D. 70 Jerusalem would be destroyed in the worst city destruction ever recorded. It far exceeds the combined deaths at Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan, in World War II when atomic bombs were dropped on the cities.

(9) But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light.

A. Believers Are a Chosen People

- Through the centuries, God had a remnant who would obey Him rather than go along with the mainline disobedience. Now, the followers of the hated Jesus are a **chosen people**. They are kingly **priests**. As a group, they are a **holy nation**. God owns them.
- There is no special class in Christianity that has exclusive right to approach God. We are all **priests** and there is no clergy-laity system. Those claiming special access are frauds.

B. Believers Can Showcase God's Goodness

This **chosen** group is not a cloistered group, but a demonstration group, showing the **goodness of God** to

the world. Jesus had already made this clear when He said:

... let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Matthew 5:16

(10) "Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy."

A. Believers Have A Heritage

Genealogy is important to many people. They hope to locate important people in their past. Where we cannot point back to royalty or celebrities, we now have a wonderful heritage as **God's people**.

B. Believers Have Received Mercy

The Scriptures teach that every person has sinned and must be punished for each and every violation of God's law. The difference between us and the others is that we listened. We heard how God in His **mercy** sent Christ to die for our sins and we accepted that truth by repentance and immersion into Christ.

He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5

(11) Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. (12) Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when He judges the world.

A. The Believers Are Friends to the Apostle

Peter was a prince in the new, spiritual, Israel. Jesus had promised:

You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Luke 22:28-30

Yet Peter shows his affection for these saints in Asia Minor, addressing them as **friends**. Many translators have used *beloved*. There was no superiority of class, no speaking down to them.

B. We Must Exercise Our Temporary Status

In chapter 1, verse 17, Peter has spoken of our **temporary residence** in the world and he brings it up again here.

Because we are here as short-term visitors, we must keep away from worldly desires. These attractions create a war in our souls, pulling us two ways.

C. We Must Live So Our Neighbors Will Honor God

Live so our lives look right to our **neighbors**. The view that “what I do is no one else's business” doesn't fit with God's will for our lives. There are activities that may in themselves be right and proper, but they don't look right to the outsiders.

One short-term goal of believers is to have a good reputation in the world where we live. While believers may be unfairly criticized now, good deeds will pay dividends when the Lord **judges** everyone.

(13) For the Lord's sake, respect all human authority — whether the king as head of state, (14) or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honor those who do right.

A. Believers Must Respect Office-Holders

Being a citizen of God's Kingdom does not grant an exemption from obedience to community laws.

Believers might take the view that we are outside of the law and order of society because we're here on a temporary pass, but Peter stresses that we are to **respect human authority**. Being specific, he lists **the king** and his **officials**. While few **kings** are left in the world, the principle applies to our nation as a republic with its elected officials.

B. Office-Holders Do a Work For God

While we may not totally approve of the government **officials**, we are to treat them with **respect**. That begins with our talking to them and about them and includes paying our taxes without complaining and accusing the government of misusing them.

Before Peter spoke, Jesus had said clearly:

He said, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God."

Matthew 22:21

(15) It is God's will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. (16) For you are free, yet you are God's slaves, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil.

A. Rise Above Accusations

- Obedience to civil authorities is **God's will** for our lives. It may **silence** the charges of **foolish** men.
- The reference is to those who run down Christianity without either reason or knowledge.

B. We Are Free, But Slaves

James Smith writes:

The freedom that we have in Christ is not absolute. We are not free to engage in conduct that is sinful or rebellious. We must never use the freedom we have in Christ as a reason to avoid fulfilling the obligations placed on us by government.

Our Master requires of us that we submit to the regulations of civil governments.

(17) Respect everyone, and love your Christian brothers and sisters. Fear God, and respect the king.

A. Respect, Love And Fear

- **Respecting everyone** is a major challenge in our time of confrontation. It calls for careful, thought-out answers from God's people.
Jewish believers would need to treat pagan Gentiles with **respect**. That would be a challenge! We must **love** and **respect** our **Christian brothers and sisters**. Women are not second-class citizens in the kingdom.
- After setting the proper example, parents must actively teach respect to their children. One reason schools have difficulty locating bus drivers is the lack of **respect** they receive from their riders. Those readers with computer access can Google “teaching children respect.”
- The word **Christian** is not in the Greek text but *brotherhood* is.
- We are to respect the office of **king** even when we cannot **respect** the person who fills that office. An interesting illustration of this is the way David was respectful to King Saul who was wanting to kill David. He shouted to Saul:

This very day you can see with your own eyes it isn't true. For the LORD placed you at my mercy

back there in the cave. Some of my men told me to kill you, but I spared you. For I said, 'I will never harm the king—he is the LORD's anointed one.' I Samuel 24:8.

(18) You who are slaves must accept the authority of your masters with all respect. Do what they tell you — not only if they are kind and reasonable, but even if they are cruel. (19) For God is pleased with you when you do what you know is right and patiently endure unfair treatment.

A. Respect Even Cruel Masters

The respect requirement is focused on slaves among the believers. They must **respect** even **cruel masters**.

B. The Guiding Rule

Pleasing God is the guiding rule. Justice does not come first. A Christian should not be a rabble-rouser, a troublemaker, or a rebellious employee.

(20) Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you. (21) For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in His steps.

A. The Word “Example” Defined

Example referred to the practice of teaching someone to write by having them trace the letters that were first written by a skilled penman. So Christ’s suffering is a pattern for Christian slaves to follow.

We are to follow His steps and move in His direction through the challenges of life. Use the letter book of Christ as an example of how to write the story of our lives.

B. Follow The Ultimate Example

God is only **pleased** if you **suffer patiently** for **doing good**. He does not reward any wrongdoer.

The **example** to follow is **Christ** who **suffered** for each of us.

Being punished while doing right is noticed by God, and rewarded. The apostles had experiences like this as recorded in the Book of Acts. They were beaten because they insisted on preaching the resurrection of Christ. Peter had been among those beaten.

One of the most famous books about Christianity is based in this verse—*In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* by Charles Sheldon. More than 30,000,000 have been sold. The second part of the title has been the theme of groups of believers, some who have used the initials in their title: WWJD.

(22) He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. (23) He did not retaliate when He was insulted, nor threaten revenge when He suffered. He left His case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

A. Jesus Was Transparent

Christ did not deceive anyone, including His accusers. Verse 22 is a quotation from Isaiah 53:9:

He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone.

Peter knew Jesus better than any other person. Based on his experience with Jesus, he could affirm that He always responded without **sin**.

B. Jesus Did Not Retaliate

Neither did **He retaliate** to insults or threaten when beaten. His lack of response was amazing:

Don't you realize that I could ask My Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and He would send them instantly? Matthew 26:53.

He let God do the judging. When Israel continued to ignore the evidence, that culminated in the total destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70.

(24) He personally carried our sins in His body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By His wounds you are healed. (25) Once you were like sheep who wandered away. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.

Our Life From His Death

Jesus paid the penalty for our (including Peter's) **sins** so we could become **dead** to the practice of sin, including disrespect. We can live for what is **right**.

The **wounds** placed on Jesus' body by His haters had the curious effect of **healing** us!

Once we didn't have guidance on how to live. We were **wandering sheep**, but now we have turned to the great **Shepherd**. While He shepherds us, He also **guards** us from further sinning by showing us how to live respectfully.