



Pick Your Path

1 Peter #3 • 1 Peter 2:1-10 • June 7, 2026

1 Peter 2:1-10

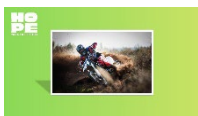


“So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech. Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, now that you have had a taste of the Lord’s kindness. 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. 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. 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.” 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.” 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. 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. “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.””
(1 Peter 2:1-10, NLT)

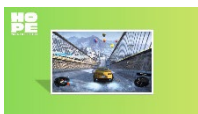
Opening



When you’re an 8-year-old boy and you want to push your vehicles to the limit, you break out the Hot Wheels® and a test track...and then you use your imagination to see what kind of damage happens when your flame-decaled supercar collides with a Scooby Doo® van.



When you're a 19-year old boy (in life or at heart), and you want to push your vehicles to the limit, you break out the dirt bike and head to a trail with jumps and curves...and then you no longer have to use your imagination to see what kind of damage happens when your 327cc, fuel-injected 2-stroke engine tries to land a jump across a 20-foot creek bed (although you may have to use your tools and your wallet).

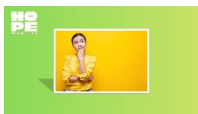


When you're an older guy who's curious about what happens when you push your vehicles to the limit, you break out your computer and run simulations...and then your graphics processor can show and tell you in 60 frames per second what damage occurs when a Toyota Camry is launched from 0 to 600 mph and sent careening down a highway toward a cliff. And then you put that footage on YouTube.

I'm too old for Hot Wheels. I've never really messed around with dirt bikes. But I do have YouTube and Instagram! ...And let me tell you, watching the simulation clips can be fascinating. I had no idea that I would be so curious to know whether a Porsche 911 at full speed could survive a jump down a mile-long ski ramp...and still brake and stop before crashing into spinning metal wheels of death at the bottom! But whenever I come across one of those videos, I can't help but watch.

It's part of how we're wired, right? You and I want to see how things play out. We like to know "what happens if..."

In the simulations, you can come up with millions of "what happens if..." scenarios. The kind of car you select and the kind of track you drive down? It makes a huge difference! One type of track leads to success and cheers; another leaves you broken and crumpled...and according to the simulation, with a 0% chance of survival (which is why one of my friends now says, "I'll never own a Ford Bronco." LOL).



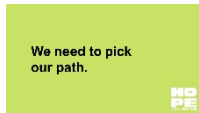
It would be great to have that kind of foresight in real life, to know what happens – not just with vehicles, but with decisions and choices! With that information, we would be able to make the best choice about the **kind of person we want to be and the kind of path we want to stay on**. We'd see whether our choice leaves us with a 10/10 "respectable" result or a flaming wreck of a life wrapped around a tree.

Thankfully (even though it is lacking in YouTube footage), we do have a couple of simulations that help us see ahead in today's Scripture passage.



In 1 Peter 2, Peter writes to an audience of Christians who are facing a hard life. Through the truth he shares, Peter helps his readers look ahead to see HOPE as the end result of the path they're on. His focus is on sharing hope, though, gives us (here, today) a chance to see how things *could* play out if we choose differently.

And as we examine what he says today, we will encounter the same choice that computer simulators, dirt bike riders, and toy car drivers all face:



We need to pick our path.

We need to see how things play out, because then we can make the best decisions about which path to be on.



The paths are already laid out.

The first thing we need to know as we pick our path is that...

The paths are already laid out.

Peter uses a lot of “chosen” language in his letter, language that makes it feel like we aren’t playing in a sandbox with infinite possibilities; rather, some of the choices have already been made.

Remember his opening greeting? Peter tells his audience:



“God the Father **knew you** and **chose you** long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy...” (1 Peter 1:2, NLT)

In today’s chapter, Peter uses other phrases of predetermination:



“and so they meet the fate that was **planned** for them.” (2:8)

“You are a **chosen** people...” (2:9)

This is where Scripture is more like Hot Wheels and the pre-built test track than a computer simulation with thousands of options. It sounds like God has *already* made the decision and locked it in! It sounds like He has *already* chosen the winners and the losers!



We can’t ignore the fact that the Bible talks about God’s “sovereignty” – He is Lord, and He gets to decide what happens. Life isn’t a democracy, where we all get to make the decisions. No, we live under the King of Kings! And what He says, goes.

Clearly, in some sense, God has already made decisions.



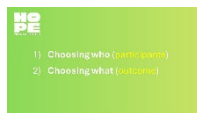
*“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he **planned for us** long ago.”*
(Ephesians 2:10, NLT)

“So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen.”
(Romans 9:18, NLT)

God is shown in these verses and elsewhere as being in complete control as He sets His purpose. What He decides will be accomplished.

Questions about God’s sovereignty are common and challenging, and we won’t pretend to answer them fully in this sermon. But, please know that somehow God has decided *some* will experience mercy and blessing while *others* will not.

Now, God can do that one of two ways. He can do it either by:



- 1) Choosing **who** goes on which path (choosing the participants)
- 2) Choosing **what** happens on that path (choosing the outcome)

In car terms, God could choose to make two paths - a path on the left where any cars that take that path are going to go through fire, drive over spikes, land in crocodile-infested waters, and then be crushed by boulders... and a path on the right where any cars that take that path will enjoy a straight, smooth stretch of fresh asphalt passing by palm trees and stopping at the beach. (God choosing the **outcome** of the path)

Or God could choose that the Scooby Doo van goes to the beach path and the supercar goes down the path of manifold death. (He chooses the **participants** on the path)

Does God choose that YOU go in the crocodile waters of death? Or does He simply choose that ANYONE who goes in crocodile waters will die? If the former, there’s nothing we can do. If the latter, the decision lies with us.

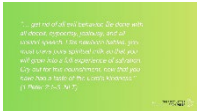
Those questions are intriguing. We could spend lots of time exploring the details... debating them... and still never arrive at a fully fleshed-out doctrine of human choice vs God’s rule.

That’s okay. Church, it’s never good to get so wrapped up in the details of what you believe that you lose sight of how you should act. Believers who

disagree can have good dialogue about our opinions (listening, considering, showing respect in the debate). But doctrine matters most when it shows up in how we live!

Here's the bottom line of this theological debate: Peter makes doctrinal statements about sovereignty, yet he still presents it in such a way that reminds us, "Even if the paths are laid out, **you and I live/think/believe as if we must actively make a choice.**"

So, Peter says...



"... get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech. 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, now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness." (1 Peter 2:1-3, NLT)

The paths may have already been laid out. **But you and I still need to pick which path to take.**



The paths are distinctly different

And those paths are distinctly different.

Peter uses a lot of Old Testament quotes in this passage, quoting the language of faith that he knew and appreciated. While Peter was clearly a New Testament Christian, he pulled from the past to make his points about these two paths. They are distinctly different!



One path fits a pattern of destruction

One path fits a pattern of destruction.

Peter brings in an architectural analogy, one used by King David in the Psalms and by the prophet Isaiah.



"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." (1 Peter 2:4, NLT)

"Cornerstone" isn't just the name of a church on the highway here in Tonganoxie; it is a building term. The "cornerstone" or "head of the corner" is a foundational block that sets that stability of the entire structure. Everything

in the building is built off this single stone. It was of utmost importance for structures in ancient times.

Jesus, Peter says, is that cornerstone. He is crucially important. Everything is evaluated using Him as the standard. But... He has been tragically rejected. Unbelief transforms him from stability to stumbling, from special to scandal.

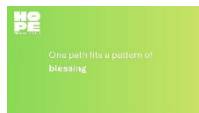


“He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they do not obey God’s word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them.”

(1 Peter 2:8, NLT)

Those who reject him are in darkness. They practice wicked and evil behaviors. They are no longer part of God’s people. They miss out on mercy. Their path of rejection becomes a path of destruction.

That’s one path.



One path fits a pattern of blessing

But for those who do believe?

It’s a different story! The Cornerstone is precious and extraordinary! It brings honor and light and blessing and mercy to those who build on Him!



“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.” 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.”’ (1 Peter 2:6–7, NLT)

The path that builds on Jesus is a path of life and blessing!

Choosing the path

So, do you want blessing? Or do you want destruction?

This is where this choice is like the dirt bike – you need to know the path before you go on it. You must choose the path that will be best for you and your bike.

Do you want life? Or do you want death?

That shouldn’t be a hard question to answer, yet it is. Every day, it is a hard choice. It’s hard because choosing Jesus means giving up my own life.

Did you hear what those on the Jesus path are called?



*“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.”*
(1 Peter 2:5, NLT)

Peter says we get to be “a temple” – a holy structure. And then he mixes his metaphors and says we are also “holy priests” who offer sacrifices.

Does that sound appealing? Do you want to be a temple, or a priest?!



This week, I had a couple of youth stop by my office. They were up here helping Ms. April decorate for VBS, and Eden Gehri came in laughing uncontrollably. She thought it would be fun to try out a new title for me.

She usually likes to call me Mister Pastor Steve, Sir (inside joke). But on Wednesday, she thought she would try out “Father Howell” and she just couldn’t stop laughing long enough to get it out. “Father Howell.” Like a Catholic priest.

I’m fine if she says it...but... EWWW! I don’t want to be a priest. Do you?!

Priests (whether Catholic or Jewish) have restrictions I don’t want. They can’t do certain things that others can. They must live with certain rules. There are constraints and a lack of freedom in that role. It’s a career path that doesn’t value my independence.

If choosing Jesus and becoming a “priest” means giving up myself, most of us would rebel against that kind of restriction!

Peter, though, intends these descriptions to be positive. He wants us to see Jesus’ path and those descriptions through his own eyes. For Peter, these words aren’t a burden – “temple” and “priest” and “holy people” are words that carry the blessing of *being in God’s presence*. They speak of being close to Him!

At church last week, we sang a song called “Better is One Day,” which is based on the words of Psalm 84.



“How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of Heaven’s Armies. I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the Lord. With my whole

being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the living God....A single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else! I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God than live the good life in the homes of the wicked.” (Psalm 84:1-2,10, NLT)

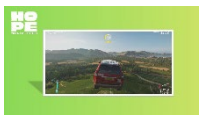
The Psalm and the song make one thing clear: being in God’s presence is best. A decision to follow Jesus puts me in a place where I dwell with God! It is a path that keeps me in His presence. Peter wants us to see that as the singular, positive path!

One path leads to destruction. One path leads to blessings. And **you and I need to pick the obvious path.**



The path has a purpose

But the choice isn’t just for my good. It is for His!



I’ve seen some of the car simulations where a vehicle is launched into the air at great speeds, but as it flies and rotates and tumbles, the programmer set up “obstacles” where the car lands perfectly or passes through an impossibly small gap. Here it fits like a keyhole, there it misses spinning helicopter blades by millimeters, and it lands perfectly on a slope and coasts to a standstill impossibly close to a non-flinching person.

Does the car get credit in that simulation? Does that path get credit? No, it all goes to the one who designed and set it up. The programmer gets glory, even though it was the car on the path that looked like it was doing all the work!

Peter says that when we pick the right path, it benefits us...but there is a higher purpose. If we follow Jesus instead of stumbling over Him, there is a result above and beyond what happens to me:



*“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, **that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**”*
(1 Peter 2:9, ESV)

We follow this path not only for our own salvation, but for the opportunity to glorify God!



Amazing, beautiful things cause us to share praise, do they not? If you see a perfect sunset, eat a perfect dessert, hear a perfect piece of music...YOU enjoy it, of course. But don't you long to tell others about it? Don't you want a friend to experience what you just saw, heard, or tasted? Don't you want to proclaim the excellencies of something perfect?

We are on this path not just for ourselves, but so we can proclaim God's excellencies to others! We will join with David in Psalm 145 and say,

"I will exalt you, my God and King, and praise your name forever and ever." (Psalm 145:1, NLT)

Why? Because it is God's good nature to want what is best for us. And what's best for us is Him! He wants that beautiful truth to be shared far and wide.

The Westminster Catechism says it this way: **The chief duty of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.**

We get to be with Him...as HIS people...as recipients of HIS mercy.

But only when we choose the right path.

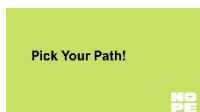
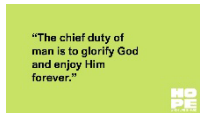
Closing

Church, we need to pick our path.

- If you have already chosen the way of following Jesus, you're on the right path! Stay there! Obediently follow Him. Crave Him with all you have! Enjoy the benefits of being part of God's chosen people, a people of His own possession...and glorify Him by proclaiming his excellencies to those around you.
- If you have stumbled over Jesus, it's not too late to return to Him. The path you're on only leads to death and destruction. Will you approach the Cornerstone with humility and ask for forgiveness? Will you look to Jesus to be your Savior, and then your Lord? Don't reject him. Believe in him, and you will never be put to shame.

Pick your path.

Prayer



Sermon Notes

The paths are already laid out.

(1 Peter 1:2; 1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 2:10; Romans 9:18; 1 Peter 2:1-3)

The paths are distinctly different

(1 Peter 2:4-8; Psalm 84:1-2,10)

The path has a purpose

(1 Peter 2:9; Psalm 145:1)

Sermon Discussion Questions

- According to 1 Peter 2:1-3, what attitudes and behaviors are believers told to get rid of, and what are they told to pursue instead?
- Why do you think Peter begins this section by addressing personal holiness before discussing identity and purpose?
- What does Peter mean when he describes Jesus as the “living cornerstone”? How does the image of a cornerstone help us understand the importance of Jesus in our lives?
- Why do some people stumble over Christ according to 1 Peter 2:8? Who in your life may currently be stumbling over Jesus, and how can you pray for and engage with them?
- What descriptions does Peter use for believers in 1 Peter 2:5,9-10? Why do you think Peter describes believers as both "living stones" and "priests"?
- How does knowing that you are chosen, loved, and shown mercy (2:10) affect your daily outlook?
- Peter says believers should "proclaim the excellencies" of God (2:9). What are some practical ways we can do that this week?
- How can your personal testimony help others see the difference between the path of destruction and the path of blessing?