

# STRIP OFF SOME THINGS AND CRAVE THE WORD OF GOD

## 1 PETER 02:01–03

### *Introduction*

This is a forceful passage of Scripture. It uses some descriptive, active words. The imperative “rid yourself” means *to strip off*, and the imperative “crave” means *to desire*. Believers are to strip off some things and crave the Word of God.

- I. There are things that have to be stripped off (v. 1).
- II. There is one thing that has to be craved: the milk of God’s Word (vv. 2-3).

### **I. 1 Peter 02: 01 Maturity and Spiritual Growth**

The believer is to strip off some things. The Greek word for “rid yourself” (apothemenoi) means to put off one’s clothing; to cleanse oneself of those things that defile. Both meanings are applicable in this verse (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 94). There are some things that defile the believer. He is to take these things and strip them off just as he would strip off his clothes; he is to cleanse himself from all that defiles him. Five things in particular are mentioned, and note: all five have to do with what has just been said in the former passage. We are to love one another deeply, from the heart. The very things that we are to strip off are the things that dirty and soil our love. They have to do with how we treat one another, with our behaviour toward our Christian brothers and sisters.

1. Believers must strip off “malice” (kakian). The word means two things.
  - a. In a general sense it means wickedness, all kinds and forms of evil. It is a word that strikes at all the vices of men.

*Rom 1:29-32 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

- b. In a narrow sense it means malice, deep-seated feelings against a person; hatred that lasts on and on; intense and long-lasting bitterness against a person. It means ill will, actually wishing that something bad would happen to a person. It means to be vicious, spiteful and to hold a grudge. It means that a person has turned his heart over to evil:
        - => He no longer has any good feelings toward the other person — none whatsoever.
        - => He could care less if something bad happened to the person.
-

The charge is strong: believers are to strip off malice — all of their evil and wickedness and all of their ill feelings against others. Believers are to be pure and clean, and they are to live pure and clean lives before their brothers and sisters in the Lord.

*1 Cor 5:8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.*

*1 Cor 14:20 Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.*

*Eph 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.*

*Col 3:8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips.*

*Titus 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.*

*1 Pet 2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind.*

2. Believers must strip off “deceit” (dolon). The word to deceive and mislead people; to set bait so as to catch them; to bait or deceive in order to achieve one’s own end. It means to be two-faced. Note that deceit or deception has to do primarily with words. When a person wants something, he tries to get it...

- by flattery
- by false tales
- by off-coloured suggestions
- by outright lying
- by false promises
- by suggestive talk
- by enticing words

When a person wants something, he looks at the other person’s weakness or ignorance, and he tries to appeal to it. He appeals to it by deceiving and beguiling the person. The exhortation is strong: believers must strip off deceit. We must not deceive and mislead people.

3. Believers must strip off “hypocrisy” (hupokriseis). The word means one who pretends, puts on a show, acts out something he is not. At first the word simply meant one who replied or answered another person. Then it came to mean acting, as actors play-acted the lines of a scene. Finally, the word was used in the worst sense: play-acting, pretending; one who wore a mask to hide his real self; one who acted one way, but who was really another way; one who put on an outward show.

All kinds of hypocrisies are meant. A person is a hypocrite...

- when he acts as though he loves and believes God, but he does not live like God tells him to live.
- when he pretends to be following God, but he is living like he wants to live.
- when he shows a concern for the things of God, but his real concern is for the things of the world.
- when he professes to believe God's Word, but he questions it and adds and takes away from it.
- when he acts as though he cares for people, but he is really full of selfishness, self-seeking, possessiveness, hoarding, envy and pride.
- when he courts friends, but he is after something.
- when he acts friendly, but he could care less.
- when he promises, but he never intends to keep his promise.

**Thought 1.** Jesus warns hypocrites, severely warns them. Believers must, therefore, strip off any semblance of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is one of the sins that God hates above all others.

=> Hypocrites shall receive the greater damnation (Mt. 23:14).

=> Hypocrites are children of hell (Mt. 23:15).

=> Hypocrites are fools and blind (Mt. 23:17, 19).

=> Hypocrites are blind guides (Mt. 23:24).

=> Hypocrites are full of extortion and excess (Mt. 23:25).

=> Hypocrites are full of all uncleanness (Mt. 23:27).

=> Hypocrites are serpents, a generation of vipers (Mt. 23:33).

=> Hypocrites shall not escape the damnation of hell (Mt. 23:33).

**Mat 23:28** *“In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”*

**Luke 12:1** *Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”*

**1 Tim 4:1-2** *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*

**Titus 1:16** *They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

**1 Pet 2:1** *Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind.*

**Prov 23:7** *For he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you.*

**Prov 26:25** *Though his speech is charming, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart.*

4. Believers must strip off "envy" (phthonous): a person without God lives in envy (phthonoi). The word means that a person covets what someone else has, covets it so much that he wants it even if it has to be taken away from the other person. He may even wish that the other person did not have it or had not received it. We may look at people and envy their...

- money
- clothes
- position
- social status
- looks
- popularity
- possessions
- authority

The word envy means all kinds of envies and jealousies; it means that we are not to look at a person and envy to be like him nor to have what he possesses. The results of envy are terrible; envy takes a terrible toll upon the life and body of a person.

=> A person who envies *does not have peace or happiness*. He is dissatisfied with what he is and has and is always wanting more and more of what others have.

=> In addition to this, envy often drives a person into *crime and lawlessness* in order to get what he craves.

=> On top of this, envy often leads to *physical problems* such as migraine headaches, high blood pressure, ulcers and other illnesses.

=> Envy also causes *emotional problems* ranging from mild neurosis or depression to psychotic behaviour.

But thanks be to God our Saviour. He saves and delivers us from envy. Through Christ He gives us real life, and He satisfies our hearts and lives with eternal pleasures (Psa. 16:11). Therefore, we must strip off all envy. We must love one another and rejoice in the persons and possessions of others. We must love them, support and build them up, not envy and wish to see them torn down.

**Prov 14:30** *A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.*

**Prov 23:17** *Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD.*

**Rom 13:13** *Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.*

*Prov 24:1 Do not envy wicked men, do not desire their company.*

*1 Cor 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.*

*Gal 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

5. Believers must strip off all “slander” (katalalias). This means to criticize, judge, backbite, gossip, censor, condemn and grumble against another person. It means to talk about and to tear down another person; to spread tales about another person that cut and hurt him and that lower his image and reputation in the eyes of others. The word usually means to talk about a person behind his back when he is not present.

Note that the brother has sinned. He has broken the law of God. He has failed and his failure is known. It is public knowledge, and he is being judged and criticized for his failure. He is being talked about. What he has done is being buzzed and gossiped about, and it is hurting and cutting him and damaging him more and more in the eyes of the world. Now, if we are forbidden to slander a person who is really guilty of sin, how much more are we forbidden to speak against a person just because we dislike or disagree with him?

Note what the Scripture says: this is *slander*. Talking about a person is *evil*. It is just as much an evil as the failure of the other person. Therefore, the person who judges is as guilty as the sinner.

The exhortation is strong: Christian believers are not to judge and slander one another. The reason is clear: we are brothers, brothers of Christ and of one another. All of us are of the family of God.

Therefore...

- we are to be loving, caring and looking after each other, not destroying each other.
- we are to be supporting, encouraging and building up one another, not tearing down one another.
- when one of us falls and gets into trouble, we are to be reaching out and helping him up, not pushing him farther down.

When we criticize a brother or sister in Christ, we are slandering one of God’s own children. Just think: we are actually slandering a son or daughter of God. This alone should keep us from slandering of our brothers in Christ.

Think about something else as well: there is never a spirit of slander in the humble and loving person. There is only a loving compassion for others, especially for those who have come short and fallen. Therefore, when we slander another person it means that we are neither humble nor loving, but the very opposite: prideful and hateful. We are slanderers.

**Thought 1.** There are several reasons why people tend to judge and criticize.

- 1) Criticism boosts our own self-image. Pointing out someone else's failure and tearing him down makes us seem a little bit better, at least in our own eyes. It adds to our own pride, ego and self-image.
- 2) Criticism is simply enjoyed. There is a tendency in human nature to take pleasure in hearing and sharing bad news and shortcomings about others.
- 3) Criticism makes us feel that our own lives (morality and behaviour) are better than the person who failed.
- 4) Criticism helps us justify the bad decisions we have made and the bad things we have done throughout our lives. We rationalize our decisions and acts by pointing out the failure of others.
- 5) Criticism points out to our friends how strong we are. Criticism gives good feelings because our *rigid beliefs* and *strong lives* are proven again. Proven how? By our brother's failure.
- 6) Criticism is an outlet for hurt and revenge. We feel *he deserves it*. Subconsciously, if not consciously, we think, "He hurt me so he deserves to hurt too." Therefore, we criticize the person who failed.

**2 Cor 12:20** *For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.*

**Eph 4:31** *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.*

**James 4:11** *Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.*

**1 Pet 2:1** *Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind.*

**Psa 101:5** *Whoever slanders his neighbour in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.*

## **II. 1 Peter 02:02–03 Crave for God's Word**

The believer is to crave one thing — the milk of God's Word. Note three points.

1. The charge is an imperative, a command: "You desire, crave and yearn for the pure spiritual milk [of the Word.] And the craving and yearning are to be constant."

- a. The word “crave” (epipotesate) means to desire, yearn and long for the Word of God. It is a strong word, very strong. It paints the picture of being an absolute essential, of hungering and thirsting after the Word. If a believer is to grow, it is absolutely essential that he hunger and thirst after the milk of the Word.

*Thought 1.* Too many believers crave the Word here and there, sporadically. Growth can come only as we live in the Word day by day.

- b. The word “pure” (adolos) means unadulterated, unmixed with anything else. Men may seek the milk of other things; they may seek to be fed and satisfied by such things as...
- religion
  - education
  - fame
  - health
  - power
  - psychology
  - philosophy
  - possessions
  - comfort
  - science
  - pleasure
  - counselling

But none of these are pure. There are specks and dust and particles within every pursuit on earth — particles that make everything on earth weak and infirm and to some degree harmful. In addition and most tragic of all, every pursuit of man is doomed to pass away when man passes away. But there is one thing that is unadulterated; one thing that is completely and perfectly pure with no mixture whatsoever, and that is the Word of God. The Word of God lives and abides forever; therefore, we must crave and yearn for the Word of God. It is our only hope of enduring forever.

- d. The word “milk” usually refers to the food needed by immature believers. That is, it is usually used to make a distinction between the milk and the meat or mature teachings of the Word. But this is not the case with the present passage. A distinction is not being made between believers. All believers are seen as needing to grow and to learn more about the Lord. All believers are to crave the pure spiritual milk (food) of the Word.
2. The purpose for craving and yearning after the Word is that we may grow. The most ancient Greek manuscripts have the words “in your salvation” — “that we may grow up in *salvation*.” The idea is that we may grow up to full salvation, until we reach full maturity.

The Greek word that is translated “spiritual” (logikos) is translated by some commentators as *the word*. That is, the verse is made to read “desire the milk of the word” or “desire the reasonable and intelligent milk.” This seems to be the correct translation: “crave the pure milk of the Word.” This has clearly been the emphasis of Peter throughout this whole passage. His subject and thrust has been the Word of God (cp. 1 Pet. 1:23-25). William Barclay states it as well as it can be stated:

*“Logos is the Greek for word, and logikos means belonging to the word. This is the sense in which the Authorized Version takes the word, and we think that it is*

*entirely correct. Peter has just been talking about the word of God which lives and abides for ever (1 Peter 1:23-25). It is the word of God which is in his mind; and we think that what Peter means here is that the Christian must desire with his whole heart the nourishment which comes from the word of God, for by that nourishment he can thrive and grow up until he reaches salvation itself. In face of all the evil of the heathen world the Christian must strengthen his soul and his life with the pure food of the word of God” (The Letters of James and Peter. “The Daily Study Bible.” Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1958, p. 227).*

3. The result of craving the Word of God is a most wonderful promise: we taste that the Lord is good. God feeds us, nourishes and nurtures us. He reveals and feeds our souls, teaching us all about His grace, His wonderful salvation and promises to us.

=> He teaches us how to live pure and clean lives; how to conquer the temptations of life; how to walk through the trials of life.

=> He teaches us all about the great salvation and promises He has made.

=> He teaches us all about Himself and the Lord Jesus Christ and the glorious hope we have of living with the Lord forever and ever.

=> He teaches us how to worship, praise and honour Him as we walk in this corruptible world.

God just takes His Word and feeds us, nourishes and nurtures us in His marvellous goodness. As we crave and yearn for His Word, He grows us more and more into His image.

*Acts 20:32 “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”*

*Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

*2 Tim 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

*2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

*Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.*

*Psa 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.*

*Psa 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*



***Psa 119:103** How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

***Psa 119:105** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*

***Psa 119:130** The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*

***Jer 15:16** When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.*

***1 Pet 1:23** For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

***2 Pet 1:19** And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*

***2 Pet 3:18** But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. ■*

# COME TO CHRIST, THE LIVING STONE

## 1 PETER 02:04–08

### *Introduction*

This is a picture of the great house that God is building, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are three pictures painted.

- I. Picture 1: Christ is the Living Stone; He was rejected by men, but chosen by God (v. 4).
- II. Picture 2: believers are living stones (vv. 5-6).
- III. Picture 3: unbelievers are disobedient builders (vv. 7-8).

### **I. 1 Peter 02:04 Jesus Christ, The Chief Cornerstone**

There is the first picture — Jesus Christ is the Living Stone. How can a stone be living? It cannot. This is simply a picture of how God looks at Christ and His followers: they are like a building that is being built by God Himself. The foundation of God's building is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. If a person wants to be a part of God's building, he has to place his life upon the foundation Stone, Christ Himself. But note what this verse says: the living stone was rejected by men. When men looked at the Stone (Christ)...

- it was not wanted.
- it did not fit in with their plans.
- it was useless and unsuitable for what they were building.
- it was not worth the price.

Men rejected Christ because they wanted to build their lives like they wanted. They wanted to do their own thing. Therefore, they cast the Stone of God aside. But note: the stone has been chosen of God. It is the very stone that God has chosen to be the foundation stone for life. It is the only stone that can support and bear the weight of life. And note: the stone chosen by God is a living stone. What does this mean? God is eternal; hence, the building of God will last forever and ever. Therefore, the cornerstone laid by God is bound to be eternal; it shall never deteriorate or waste away. The cornerstone is living and shall exist forever and ever.

The symbolism of the living cornerstone says three significant things.

1. The living cornerstone is the first stone laid. All other stones are placed after it. It is the *preeminent* stone in time. So it is with Christ; He is *the first* of God's new movement.

=> Christ is the author of salvation. All others are the readers of the story.

*Heb 2:10 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.*

---

**Heb 12:2** *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

=> Christ is the source of eternal salvation, of our faith. All others are the recipients of His promises.

**Heb 5:9** *And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

=> Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, *beginning and the end*. All others come after Him and are under Him.

**Rev 1:8** *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”* (cp. 21:6; 22:13).

=> Christ is the forerunner, one who went before us into the very presence of God. All others enter God’s presence after Him.

**Heb 6:19-20** *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*

2. The cornerstone is the supportive stone. All other stones are placed upon it and held up by it. They all rest upon it. It is the preeminent stone in position and power. So it is with Christ; He is the support and power, the Foundation of God’s new movement.

=> Christ is *the Head cornerstone*, the only true foundation upon which man can build. All crumble who are not laid upon Him.

**1 Cor 3:11** *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

=> Christ is *the chief cornerstone* upon which all others are joined together. All who wish to be joined together have to be laid upon Him.

**Eph 2:20-22** *Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

=> Christ is *the living Stone* upon which all others have to be built if they wish to live and be a part of God’s spiritual house. All others have to be built upon Him if they wish to live and have their spiritual sacrifice accepted by God.

**1 Pet 2:4-5** *As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

3. The living Stone is the stone to which men must come if they are to become a part of God's building. It is to Christ that we must come. No one can be a part of God's building unless he places himself upon the foundation stone laid by God. God accepts no one who refuses to become a part of His building. And God is just like all builders; He has a foundation upon which all workers must lay the stones of their lives.

*Mat 7:24-27* "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

*1 Cor 2:11* For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

*2 Tim 2:19* Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

## **II. 1 Peter 02:05-06 Believers are Living Stones**

There is the second picture — believers are living stones. Remember: God is eternal which means that His building is eternal. The Foundation Stone laid by Hun shall never decay nor waste away. Christ lives forever and ever. Therefore, when we place our lives upon the living stone of God, the living stone supports and holds us up eternally. We become living stones, stones that shall exist forever and ever. Note three significant facts.

1. Believers are being built into a spiritual house (v. 5). This is a picture of the church that God is building all over the earth. It includes all believers of all generations. It is a picture of what is called the universal church or universal temple of God. Note that God's house is a *spiritual house*. What does this mean? It means that God's house is spiritual as opposed to physical. A physical house is not permanent; it ages, deteriorates and wastes away. But not God's spiritual house. The spiritual world or dimension is the real world, the world that is permanent and eternal. Therefore, the spiritual house of God does not age, deteriorate or decay. This means two wonderful things.
  - a. First, when we turn to God and lay our lives upon the foundation stone of Christ, we become a part of God's spiritual house. We shall never die or waste away, but we shall live permanently, forever and ever in God's spiritual and eternal house.
  - b. Second, there are many stones who are going to live forever with us. It takes many stones to build a great building, and the same is true of God's spiritual house. We are only one of many who are being placed into God's great spiritual house. The point is this:

there is no room for pride, arrogance, envy, jealousy, criticism, backbiting, anger, accusations, discrimination, prejudice or wrath among God's building; no room for a stone to become puffed up over another stone.

All living stones are needed in God's house. In fact, the house cannot be completed unless there are enough stones to build it. There is a place for all of us, and we are going to exist together forever. Therefore, we are to place ourselves and take our place in the house of God. We are to place ourselves right where we belong and do our part in holding up the building. We are not to seek the place or position or function of any other stone. We are not to weaken the building to any degree.

**Thought 1.** William Barclay tells a story from Sparta and then drives the point home with a striking application.

*“There is a famous story from Sparta. A Spartan king boasted to a visiting monarch about the walls of Sparta. The visiting monarch looked around and he could see no walls. He said to the Spartan king, ‘Where are these walls about which you speak and boast so much?’ The Spartan king pointed at his bodyguard of magnificent Spartan troops. ‘These,’ he said, ‘are the walls of Sparta, and every man of them a brick.’*

*“Now, the point is quite clear. So long as a brick lies by itself it is useless. It only becomes of use when it is built into a building. That is why it was made; and it is in being built into a building that it realizes its function and the reason for its existence. It is so with the individual Christian. To realize his destiny he must not remain alone, but must be built into the fabric and edifice of the Church” (The Letters of James and Peter, p. 231).*

2. Believers are a holy priesthood (v. 5). The chief function of the priest is to stand between God and men, to represent men before God and to present men to God. Man has just never felt worthy enough to approach God; he has usually felt that God was so far away that he could never reach God. Therefore, man has felt the need for priests to carry his case before God.

The point to note is man's thoughts about God, how far away he thinks God is — so far away that man needs a priest, some godly person to represent him before God. But note the Scripture: believers are being built up as an holy priesthood. Every single believer now stands before God as a priest. He can now approach God on his own. God is not far off and removed from man. Any person who turns to God and lays his life upon the foundation of Christ becomes a part of God's spiritual house. That person is in the very house of God itself. He can talk and share with God whenever he chooses. He can worship and praise God and cry out for God's help and deliverance any time he wishes. The believer himself is now a priest before God. (See *Priest*, 1 Pet. 2:9.)

**Thought 1.** The priesthood of the believer is one of the great teachings of Scripture. Just imagine! We stand before God as a priest, as one who has access into God's presence any time of any day. There is no reason whatsoever why we should ever be overcome by any problem or trouble in this life. We are in the house of God. We can approach Him anytime and receive whatever we need to meet the demands of life: wisdom, provision, resource or strength.

Now note why we are made priests before God: that we might offer spiritual sacrifices to God. In the past men have brought their sacrifices to priests and had the priests present their sacrifices to God. But now believers themselves are made priests for this very purpose: that they might offer up their own sacrifices to God. Men are now to bring their own offerings and sacrifices to God. They themselves are now the priests in the house of God. However, note a critical point: their sacrifices are made acceptable only by Jesus Christ. A person has to have his life lying upon the foundation of Christ. He must be trusting and believing in the support and power of Christ to make him a part of God's house. The only sacrifices that God accepts are the sacrifices made within His house. Scripture says that the believer is to make the following sacrifices.

=> He is to sacrifice his body as a living sacrifice to God. He is not to conform any longer to this world.

*Luke 9:23* Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

*Luke 14:27* "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

*Rom 8:13* For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

*Rom 12:1-2* Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

*Gal 5:24* Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

*Phil 2:17* But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.

*2 Tim 4:6* For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.

=> He is to sacrifice his life to God as he walks day by day. He is to follow God in love, even as Christ loved us and gave Himself as an offering and a sacrifice to God.

***Eph 5:1-2** Be imitators of God. therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

***1 John 3:16** This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

=> He is to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.

***Heb 13:15** Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name.*

***Psa 107:22** Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.*

***Psa 116:17** I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD.*

***Jer 33:11** The sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, saying, “Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; his love endures forever.” For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before, says the LORD.*

***Jonah 2:9** “But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the LORD.”*

=> He is to offer the sacrifices of good works and gifts and money.

***Heb 13:16** And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

***Luke 12:33** “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”*

***Acts 20:35** “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

***Rom 12:13** Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

***Gal 6:6-10** Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not*

*give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

**1 Tim 6:18** *Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*

=> He is to offer spiritual sacrifices, that is, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

**1 Pet 2:5** *You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

**Gal 5:22-23** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

**Psa 4:5** *Offer right sacrifices and trust in the LORD.*

=> He is to sacrifice his life in order to lead people to faith in Christ.

**Phil 2:16-17** *As you hold out the word of life — in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.*

**Mat 4:19** *“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”*

**John 4:35** *“Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”*

**1 Cor 9:19-23** *Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law, so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law, so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.*

**Psa 126:6** *He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.*

3. Believers are a fulfilment of prophecy (v. 6. Cp. Psa. 118:22; Isa. 28:16.) The prediction that the Messiah would be the chief or chosen cornerstone of God’s building was made centuries before Christ ever came into the world. Note the four great things predicted:

=> That God Himself would lay the cornerstone. God Himself would send the Messiah into the world and use Him as the foundation of God’s eternal house.



- => That God would select or elect Him to be the cornerstone. There would be plenty of philosophies, religions and ideas about how to best build a world and life for man. But God would choose only one foundation stone for the world and life: Jesus Christ.
- => That God would count His foundation stone precious. The stone selected by Him would be the most precious thing in all the universe: it would be His very own Son. He would choose His own Son to become the Foundation Stone for men's lives and for the eternal world God was planning. There is nothing in the world that is any more precious to God than His own dear Son. Therefore, God would count Him precious, the only thing precious enough to serve as the Foundation Stone for the eternal house of God.
- => That believers would not be put to shame (*kataischunthei*), that is, confounded, disappointed and confused. Believing and trusting in Jesus Christ — leaning upon him and building upon Him — is the only way to keep from being eternally confused, shamed and disappointed.

The point is this: believers — their salvation in Christ — are the fulfilment of this prophecy. God predicted that He would be building a spiritual and eternal house for believers. He laid the foundation when He sent Christ into the world, and believers have been laying the stones of their lives upon Christ ever since. How? By believing in Him, that is, by laying their lives upon Him or by building upon Him. The result has been phenomenal: those who have built upon Christ have experienced a most wonderful thing. All the confusion, shame and disappointment in this life and the fear of judgment in the next life have disappeared. Believers are now flooded with life, a life that just overflows with love, joy, peace, victory and triumph and with confidence and assurance that all things shall be well in the future.

*John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

*John 3:15-16 That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

*Rom 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

### **III. 1 Peter 02:07-08 Unbelievers, Disobedient Builders**

The third picture — unbelievers are pictured as disobedient builders. Christ has done so much for man, He should be the most precious thing in a man's life. But the greatest tragedy in all of history is that He is not considered to be precious by some people. He is to believers, but they are a small minority of people. The vast, vast majority of people are unbelievers. They just do not believe that Jesus Christ is the foundation stone for their lives. The four points of the Scripture state it well.

1. Unbelievers disqualify and reject the stone. They look at the various foundation stones of life and...
  - they do not want the Stone [Christ].
  - they do not think that the Stone will fit in with their plans.
  - they do not believe the Stone [Christ] will suit what they are building.
  - they do not believe the Stone [Christ] is worth the price. They just do not think the Stone [Christ] is worth all they are and have.

The point is forceful: they reject and disqualify the stone. They do not want Christ enough to give all they are and have in order to get him.

2. Christ is made the Head of the corner anyway. Despite the rejection of men, Christ is made the cornerstone of the only permanent and lasting building. God selected and elected Him despite man. And if man is to become a part of an eternal house that lasts forever and that brings an abundance of life, he has to lay his life upon the foundation of Christ.
3. Unbelievers stumble over the stone of Christ. He is a rock that makes them fall. What does this mean? When people look at Jesus Christ, they stumble over Him; they do not understand...
  - how He could be anything other than a man just like the rest of us.
  - how He could be born of a virgin, God incarnate in human flesh.
  - how He could live a sinless life, live without committing a single sin.
  - how His death could be any more than the death of a martyr who died for a great cause.
  - how His resurrection is anything but a tall tale made up by His followers to secure more and more followers.

Simply stated, many people do not understand nor believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He was sent into the world by God to save men; that He was able to live a sinless life because He was the God-Man who had come to earth for that very purpose; that He died and arose from the dead as the Perfect and Ideal Man so that His ideal death and resurrection could cover man.

People just stumble over the facts or else they fall because Christ lays the burden of total commitment upon man. After all, if Jesus Christ is truly who He claimed to be, we owe Him our lives — all that we *are and have*. Most men are not willing to give up the right to their lives and property. They fall at this demand of Christ. Therefore, they stumble over Him. But note:

=> to stumble means that we have tripped up and fallen, that we damage ourselves.

=> to fall means that we hurt ourselves.

4. Note another fact: what we are stumbling over. We are actually stumbling over the message, the very Word of God itself. What is so awful about this? The Word of God is the only incorruptible, imperishable seed on earth that lives and stands forever (cp. 1 Pet. 1:23-25). If we reject the glorious gospel of God's Word, the glorious gospel that Jesus Christ is the Foundation Stone of God's building, then we are rejecting the only hope of living forever. We are appointing ourselves to a state of unbelief and disobedience to God. That is, we are steeping ourselves in more and more unbelief and becoming harder and harder to the gospel. We are living lives that are becoming more and more disobedient.

*Luke 22:67* "If you are the Christ, " they said, "tell us." Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me."

*John 3:11* "I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony."

*John 3:16-18* "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

*John 3:36* "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

*John 8:24* "I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."

*John 12:37* Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

*Heb 3:12* See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

*Heb 4:11* Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

*Jer 6:15* "Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them," says the LORD. ■

# KNOW WHO YOU ARE: THE PEOPLE OF GOD

## 1 PETER 02:09–10

### *Introduction*

Know who you are. You are not a people who stumble over Christ, a people who question His claims and deity and refuse to believe Him. You are a people who believe Christ, a people who are building your lives upon the Foundation Stone of God's Son. You have taken your lives and laid them upon Him; you have entrusted your whole being into the keeping of Christ. Therefore, know who you are: you are the people of God, the people He is building to live with Him forever and ever. (See 1 Pet. 2:4-8.)

- I. Know what kind of people you are (v. 9).
- II. Know what your purpose is: to declare His praises (v. 9).
- III. Know what has happened to you (v. 10).

### **I. *1 Peter 02:09 A Chosen People, A Royal Priesthood***

Know what kind of people you are. Once you believe in God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, you become very, very special to God. You become special because you trust His Son. God the Father has only one Son...

- only one Son who has God's perfect nature, who is holy, righteous and pure, loving, kind and gentle just as God is.
- only one Son who came to earth to save men by dying for them by showing them how much God loves them.

God loves His Son so much that when a person trusts His Son — really believes and trusts Him — God will do anything for that person. The person becomes very, very special to God. God takes all believers and does four wonderful things for them.

1. Believers become a “chosen people” (*genos eklekton*). The Greek words actually mean a *chosen or elect race*. Peter takes the term from the Old Testament where God stated the same thing about Israel.

*Isa. 43:20-21* “My people, my chosen. The people I formed for myself.”

The idea is that of a new race of people, a new species that differs entirely from the other races upon earth. This is a shocking statement to some people; nevertheless it is exactly what the Word of God claims. God is actually creating a new race of people upon earth. How? How can it be that believers from China, Russia, Asia, Africa, India, Europe, the Americas, the Islands, Canada and all the other nations of the world form a new race of people? By the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is changing people inwardly, not outwardly. He is not changing facial and skin features. These mean little; they are only superficial differences that change, age, perish, die and decay ever so rapidly.

---

God is changing people within their hearts and minds and lives, changing them where it really matters. God is implanting His divine nature within believers. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, God's divine nature is immediately implanted into his heart and life.

=> The person is *born again*.

**John 3:3** *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

**John 3:5-6** *Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."*

**1 Pet 1:23** *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

**1 John 5:1** *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.*

=> The person receives a *renewed mind*.

**Rom 12:2** *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**Rom 8:5** *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.*

=> The person becomes a *new creation*.

**2 Cor 5:17** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

**Gal 6:15** *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.*

=> The person becomes a *new person, a new self*.

**Eph 4:24** *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

**Col 3:10** *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

=> The person receives a *new spirit*.

**Ezek 11:19** *I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.*

**Rom 6:4** *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

**Rom 7:6** *But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*

(See Eph. 4:17-19 for the New Race of People God is creating.)

2. Believers become a *royal priesthood*. To a person who has never given his life to Jesus Christ, God seems far away and off in outer space someplace. God just does not seem that concerned with human life. There is no personal relationship and little, if any, fellowship and communion with God. A day by day relationship that praises and honours God and brings one's needs to God and knows that God will meet one's needs — all this is missing to the person who has never committed his life to Christ. God seems untouchable and unreachable and out of range of man's day to day affairs. Without Jesus Christ a person just has no access and no closeness to God. This is the reason men have always felt the need to have priests, a body of people who would dedicate their lives to God and who would carry the needs of men before God. Men have felt the need to have a representative before God, some godly priest who could present his needs to God.

This is the glorious message of the gospel: when we receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour, God creates us into a royal priesthood. God makes a royal priest out of everyone of us. He gives us open access into His presence forever and ever. We can actually approach God anytime. In fact, God expects us to live in His presence — to fellowship, commune and walk in His presence all day every day.

Note the word “*royal*,” a royal priesthood. This simply means that we are priests of royalty, priests who belong to the Sovereign Majesty of the universe, the King of kings and Lord of lords. We are the priesthood of God Himself, the priests who rule and reign with Christ and who serve and worship God face to face, day by day, hour by hour and moment by moment. We are the priests who live and move and have our being in His presence, who walk and live in open communion with Him.

**Thought 1.** How many of us actually walk and live in the presence of God like this? How many know what it is to have an *unbroken communion* with God? How many know what it is to be praying always? May God convict our hearts and stir us to recommit our lives to prayer and communion — to praying always — to seeking an unbroken communion and fellowship with Him every moment of the twenty four hours of every day.

**1 Pet 2:5** *You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

**Rev 1:6** *And has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

**Rev 20:6** *Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.*

**Exo 19:6** *“You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”*

**John 15:7** *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

**2 Cor 10:3-5** *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

**Eph 6:18** *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

**Phil 4:6-8** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.*

**1 Th 5:17** *Pray continually.*

**Heb 10:22** *Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

**James 4:8** *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

3. Believers become a *holy nation*. This is a very meaningful title for believers. Just think about it: God is building a *new nation* of people. He is drawing people from all over the world, people from all the nations of the world, and creating a new nation. What is the nation? It is the *holy nation* of God. Remember: the word “holy” (hagios) means separated, set apart and different. Any person who is willing to separate from the sin and evil of this world and set his life apart unto God, God will take that person and make him a citizen of His holy nation. This is what holy means: to be different from

the world, from its sin, evil and death. It means to be separated from the evil life of the world and set apart to the holy life of God. The person who turns to God becomes a citizen of God's holy nation:

- => He serves the Sovereign Head of God's nation, even God Himself.
- => He obeys the laws of God's nation.
- => He is dedicated to follow the customs and lifestyle of God's nation.
- => He speaks up for and defends the nation of God.

**Exo 19:6** “‘You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

**Lev 11:45** *I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.*

**Isa 35:8** *And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it.*

**Luke 1:74-75** *To rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

**2 Cor 7:1** *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

**Eph 4:24** *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

**1 Th 3:13** *May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.*

**1 Pet 1:16** *For it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

**2 Pet 3:10-12** *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.*

4. Believers become a “people who belong to God” (*laos eis peripoiesin*). The Greek means...
  - “a people for God's own possession” (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 98).
  - “the people to be His very own” (Charles B. Williams. *The New Testament in the Language of the People*. “The Four Translation New Testament.” New York, 1966).



- “a people saved to be His own” (William F. Beck. *The New Testament in the Language of Today*. “The Four Translation New Testament.” New York, 1966).

This is a most precious thought: that God makes us His very own people, a very special possession of His. Possession has the idea of value, of worth and preciousness. We are more precious to God than all the precious gems and treasures of the world. Possession also has the idea of provision, protection and security. We are God’s possession, His very special people; therefore, He will provide and protect us and make us secure in every sense of the word.

**Exo 19:5** *Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine.*

**Deu 14:2** *For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.*

**Psa 100:3** *Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

**Luke 1:17** *“And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

**Acts 15:14** *Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself.*

**Eph 1:13-14** *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession — to the praise of his glory.*

**Titus 2:11-14** *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

**1 Pet 2:9** *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

**Rev 21:3** *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*

## 1 PETER 02:09 PRIEST, PRIESTHOOD, MEDIATOR

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 02:09*

A priest is a person who has access into God's presence, who represents men before God and God before men. He is a mediator between God and men: he offers sacrifices and makes prayer to God for men. The priest was always looked upon as the one person who could carry a man's case before God and God would accept the man because of the priest's intercession.

1. Throughout Israel's history the high priest was the chief priest who essentially had four functions.
  - => He supervised the other priests.
  - => He made a sin offering (Lev. 4).
  - => He offered a sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).
  - => He was shown the will of God (Num. 27:21; Neh. 7:65).
2. The development of the priesthood seems to have been as follows: at first, individuals were priests (Gen. 4:3-4). Later on the head of a family, usually the father, began to serve as the priest (Gen. 8:20; 12:7; 13:8; 26:25; 31:54). When God created the nation Israel and gave Israel the law at Mount Sinai, He said that the nation was to be unto God "a kingdom of priests" (Exo. 19:6). But Israel failed to obey God's law. So God turned to one family of Israel, Aaron's family, and appointed them as the priests who were to minister to the nation (Exo. 28:1; Lev. 21:16-24).
3. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is said to be the perfect and eternal High Priest of God Himself (see Heb. 7:1-8:5; 10:1-18). The sacrifice which He offered to God for men was the death of Himself. What this means is this: Jesus Christ has made the perfect and eternal sacrifice to God. He died for our sins, paid the penalty and judgment of death for us. No other sacrifice by death has to be made. God has accepted Christ's sacrifice of Himself — eternally.

Before Christ the presence of God was said to dwell in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle and Temple. Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place and that only once a year. It was separated from men by a veil. But when Christ died, Scripture says that the veil was torn from top to bottom *by an act of God* (Mt. 27:51). The torn veil is also said to be a symbol of Christ's body which was sacrificed or torn upon the cross (Heb. 10:20). All believers now have access to God through the death of Christ — into the holiest of holies right along with Christ (Heb. 10:19-22).

4. Since Christ, the individual believer has become his own priest before God; that is, he has the right to approach God for himself. As priest, the believer has two functions: he is to offer intercession and he is to offer sacrifices to God. He makes the following sacrifices to God.

=> He sacrifices his own body (Rom. 12:1; Ph. 2:17; Tim. 4:6; Jas. 1:27; 1 Jn. 3:16).

=> He sacrifices praise to God continually (Heb. 13:15; cp. Exo. 25:22).

=> He sacrifices his substance (Rom. 12:13; Gal. 6:6, 10; Tit. 3:14; Heb. 13:2, 16; 3 Jn. 5-8).

=> He sacrifices his service “to do good” (Heb. 13:16). □

## II. *1 Peter 02:09 Believer's Purpose*

Know what your purpose is. Why does God do so much for believers? There is one supreme reason:

*1 Pet 2:9b That you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

The statement “that you may declare” (*hopos exaggeilete*) means to speak forth; to tell out; to publish abroad; to set forth. The word “praises” (*aretas*) means virtues, excellencies, and the supreme and eminent qualities of God (Alan Stibbs, *The First Epistle General of Peter*. “The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” p. 104). The very task of the believer is to witness for God, to share the glorious message of God. What is that message? Note the verse: “the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” The message that we are to share is the glorious message of salvation. God will deliver man out of darkness into the light. This is what He has done for believers. Therefore, we are to proclaim the glorious truth that God has saved us through the Light of the world, through Jesus Christ Himself. He has saved us out of the darkness of sin and death and delivered us into the light of eternity. We shall live forever. We are to praise God, proclaim the glorious message of His wonderful light or salvation.

*Mark 16:15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

*2 Cor 4:13 It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.*

*2 Cor 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

*Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

*Acts 4:20* “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

*Psa 66:16* Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.

*Isa 63:7* I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us — yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

*Mal 3:16* Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.

### **III. 1 Peter 02:10 Believers, The People of God**

Know what has happened to you. Two great facts about believers are covered in this verse.

1. In the past believers were not a people, but now they have been made into the people of God. This is striking language. What does it mean *not to be a people*? Are unbelievers not a people? It means to be without purpose and significance in life; to be missing the very point of life, the very reason for living. It means God created man and gave man life. If man does not live that life, then he is not living, not in the real sense of living. He exists, but he is missing out on life, on what life really is. He is missing the very purpose, meaning and significance of life. He shall never fulfil, satisfy or complete the purpose of life.

But when a person comes to God’s Son, when a person enters the light of Christ, God saves him and gives him the light of life. He is given the light of life’s purpose, meaning and significance. He becomes a member of the people of God. He fulfils, satisfies and completes life and all that life is meant to be.

*John 1:12* Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

*Rom 8:15* For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

*2 Cor 6:17-18* “Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

*Gal 4:4-6* But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

**Deu 14:2** *For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.*

**Hosea 11:1** *“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”*

2. In the past believers had not received mercy, but now they have received mercy. Before we were saved we were like everyone else: we ignored, neglected, cursed, rebelled against and rejected God. We refused to change our lives and to cry out for the mercy of God: therefore, God could not have mercy upon us. But when we repented and turned to God, God had mercy upon us and saved us. He forgave our sin and neglect and brought us into His love and grace and gave us the glorious privilege of living with Him forever. God had mercy upon us and allowed us the glorious privilege of becoming a member of the people of God.

**Eph 2:4-9** *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*

**Titus 3:5** *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

**Psa 103:17** *But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children.*

**Lam 3:22-23** *Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

**Joel 2:13** *Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.*

**Micah 7:18** *Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. ■*

# ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS

## 1 PETER 02: 11–12

### *Introduction*

We live in a day when the flesh (sinful nature) is exalted and evil desires honoured. A person's esteem and worth and image are often determined...

- by how much of the world he possesses
- by how much money he has
- by how much power he has
- by how much worldly recreation and pleasure he is able to enjoy
- by how famous he becomes
- by how many people he conquers in face to face confrontations or in bed sexually

The flesh (sinful nature) is exalted and evil desires honoured. But this is not the way of God and His Word. Scripture is clear: abstain from evil, sinful desires.

- I. Reason 1: you are aliens and strangers on earth (v. 11).
- II. Reason 2: evil desires, lusts war against your soul (v. 11).
- III. Reason 3: unbelievers are watching (v. 12).

### **I. *1 Peter 02: 11 Aliens and Strangers on Earth***

Abstain from evil desires because you are aliens and strangers on earth.

1. The word “alien” (parepidemos) has more of a temporary idea than *stranger* (paroikoi). Alien has the idea of a visitor or sojourner, of a foreigner who may be visiting and staying for a while but not long enough to lease a house.

The point is this: the believer is only passing through the earth on his way home to heaven. Heaven is his home, and his heart and mind are at home. He lives in a consciousness of home and his thoughts are upon home. He lives and walks in the consciousness of being in heaven with God. This is his attitude, his thoughts as he walks through his pilgrimage upon earth. He travels through life often moving from city to city, but his mind and heart are always upon heaven which is his permanent home.

Note what this means in so far as the world is concerned: the believer does not become entangled with the world and its affairs. His customs and lifestyle come from heaven, not from the earth. He does not practice the customs and lifestyle of the earth but of heaven.

*Heb 11:9-10* By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

---

**Heb 11:13-16** *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

**Heb 13:14** *For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*

2. The word “stranger” (paroikoi) means someone who dwells alongside or is exiled, but his home is elsewhere. It is the picture of a foreigner who is in a country for a while, long enough to rent or lease a house, but he is not a permanent resident. He has no legal rights or status. He is a stranger, an exile who dwells in a strange land (B.C. Coffin. *First Peter*. “The Pulpit Commentary,” Vol. 22, p.72). What Peter is saying is this: the believer is a stranger, a foreigner, an exile on earth. He is a resident, but he is not a citizen of this earth. He has no legal status in the world. He is not to follow the standards and the ways of the world. He belongs to God and to heaven; therefore, his legal status is in heaven. He is to follow the standards and the ways of God. The believer’s laws are the laws of God, the highest and most moral and just laws in all the universe. The believer has no right to live by the standard and laws of the world, for they are far lower than the standards and laws of God. The believer is to live as a stranger on earth, as one whose heart and mind are upon a far greater home and world. The believer’s heart is to be upon perfection of life and morality and justice, a home and world where perfection is the rule and standard.

**Thought 1.** This does not mean that the believer does not obey the legal laws of a land. He does; all foreigners are to obey the laws of a land when they visit that land. In fact, believers will go far beyond obeying human laws and do much more when they obey God’s laws. God’s laws and standards stress perfect behaviour plus love, and there is no greater law than love. Therefore, the believer is to abstain from fleshly, sinful desires because such desires are of the world, and he has no right to partake of those fleshly, sinful desires. He is to obey the laws of God which forbid such sins and immoralities.

**Phil 3:20-21** *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

**Rev 21:27** *Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.*

**1 Chr 29:15** *We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope.*

## II. *1 Peter 02:11 Sinful Desire War against the Soul*

Abstain from evil desires because they war against the soul. The term “sinful desires” (sarkikon epithumion) means the evil desires, urges, passions, lusts of the flesh and cravings of the sinful nature. It means to have a yearning passion for the things of the flesh. Every person has experienced the flesh...

- yearning
- longing
- wanting
- taking
- thirsting
- desiring
- grabbing
- hungering
- pulling
- grasping
- craving

Every person knows what it is to have his flesh craving after something, to have it yearning and yearning to lay hold of something. The flesh is strong and difficult to control, and it never lets up its assault against the will.

1. What are the lusts of the flesh, the acts of the sinful nature? What kinds of sins are being referred to by Scripture? Scripture means far more than the sexual sins usually thought about when the lusts of the flesh are mentioned. They are listed in Galatians 5:19-21. When they are read they paint a picture of human nature that is seen or experienced by us all every day:
  - a. *Sexual immorality* (moicheia): a broad word including all forms of immoral and sexual acts. It is pre-marital sex and adultery; it is abnormal sex, all kinds of sexual vice, sexual unfaithfulness to husband or wife.
  - b. *Impurity* (akatharsia): moral impurity; doing things that dirty, pollute and soil life.
  - c. *Debauchery* (aselgeia): filthiness, indecency and shamefulness.
  - d. *Idolatry* (eidololatreia): the worship of idols, whether mental or material; the worship of some idea of what God is like, of an image of God within a person’s mind; the giving of one’s primary devotion (time and energy) to something other than God. (See *Idolatry*, 1 Cor. 6:9.)
  - e. *Witchcraft* (pharmakeia): sorcery: the use of drugs or of evil spirits to gain control over the lives of others or over one’s own life. In the present context it would include all forms of seeking the control of one’s fate including astrology, palm reading, séances, fortune telling, crystals and other forms of witchcraft.
  - f. *Hatred* (echthrai): enmity, hostility and animosity. It is the hatred that lingers and is held for a long time, a hatred that is deep within.
  - g. *Discord* (ereis): strife, contention, fighting, struggling, quarrelling, dissension and wrangling. It means that a man fights against another person in order to get something:



position, promotion, property, honour or recognition. He deceives, doing whatever has to be done to get what he is after.

- h. *Jealousy (zelo)*: wanting and desiring to have what someone else has. It may be material things, recognition, honour or position.
- i. *Fits of rage (thumoi)*: indignation; a violent, explosive temper; anger; quick and explosive reactions that arise from boiling emotions. But it is anger which fades away just as quickly as it arose. It is not anger that lasts.
- j. *Selfish ambitions (eritheia)*: self-seeking: craving position, power, fame for selfish ends; a strong desire for attainment or achievement to gain honour or recognition; pretension.
- k. *Dissensions (dichostasiai)*: division, rebellion, standing against others and splitting off from others.
- l. *Factions (haireseis)*: sect, party, differences, heresies; some faction rejecting the fundamental beliefs of God, Christ, the Scriptures and the church; believing and holding to some teaching other than the truth.
- m. *Envy (phthonoi)*: this word goes beyond jealousy. It is the spirit...
  - that wants not only the things that another person has, but begrudges the fact that the person has them.
  - that wants not only the things to be taken away from the person, but wants him to suffer through the loss of them.
- n. *Drunkenness (methai)*: taking drink or drugs to affect one's senses for lust or pleasure; becoming tipsy or intoxicated; partaking of drugs; seeking bodily or sexual pleasure through drink or drugs.
- o. *Orgies (komi)*: carousing; uncontrolled license, indulgence and pleasure; taking part in wild parties or in drinking parties; lying around indulging in feeding the lusts of the flesh.
- 2. Note that the flesh, sinful desires war against the soul. The flesh has within it base and unregulated urges and passions. A man senses the desire and urge to do what he likes, to lift the restraints and to follow his own desires and passions. He knows he should not do it, but the pull and desire tugs and struggles and wars against the soul.
- a. The flesh or sinful nature keeps a person from doing what he would. Every person has experienced the power of the flesh; everyone has caved in to the flesh and done something that he did not want to do. He fought against doing it — knew it was harmful or hurtful — yet he could not resist the flesh. He gave in to the power of the flesh and did it. He...
  - overate
  - became angry
  - began smoking
  - got drunk
  - did evil things
  - lusted

- became prideful
- committed immorality
- cursed
- cheated, lied or stole
- acted selfishly

Note another fact as well. All of us have been tempted, and we have known how to combat and overcome the temptation. However, the flesh was so strong we just did not struggle long enough to overcome it. The struggle we experienced involved that of...

- controlling
- showing kindness
- sacrificing
- showing kindness
- being patient
- loving
- helping
- reaching out
- giving
- giving in

The point is this: the flesh is so strong that it often keeps us from doing what we would. The only hope of ever controlling the flesh is to walk in the Spirit of God — in His presence and power.

***Rom 7:15-20** I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.*

***2 Cor 10:4** The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.*

- b. Now note a fact of critical importance: the flesh in itself is not sinful. The flesh or human body is God given; it is for God's use. In fact, when a person is converted to Christ, his body becomes a temple for God to dwell in through the Holy Spirit. The Christian is not told to cleanse himself from the flesh but from "the desires of the sinful nature" (Gal. 5:16), from "everything that contaminates body and spirit" (2 Cor. 7:1), and from "the acts of the sinful nature" (Rom. 13:12; Gal. 5:19). The acts of the sinful nature are the fruit of indwelling sin, and sin originates in the heart not in the flesh.
3. The exhortation is strong: "abstain from sinful desires, which war against the soul." We must abstain from them, for they do unbelievable harm and damage to the soul.
  - a. Sinful desires or fleshly lusts enslave and weaken the freedom of the soul. Sinful desire enslaves, no matter what the desires are:
    - => Desire for drugs enslaves.
    - => Desire for alcohol enslaves.
    - => Desire for cigarettes enslaves.

- => Desire for sex enslaves.
- => Desire for pornography enslaves (films or magazines).
- => Desire for position and power enslaves.
- => Desire for money enslaves.

The more a man follows the desires of the sinful nature, the more freedom and liberty he loses. He becomes a slave to that which he sets his heart upon. If he sets his mind and thoughts upon the flesh and its desires, he will enslave himself to desires. He finds himself enslaved and in bondage to those desires and finds it very difficult to break away from them.

- b. Sinful desires disturb and often destroy the peace and security, assurance and confidence of the soul. When the believer came to Christ, one of the first things Christ did was give him peace and security of soul. If the believer turns back to the world and follows his desires, he breaks his peace with God and loses the security of God's presence and guidance and protection.
- c. Sinful desires hamper the growth of the soul. The soul living in the desires of the flesh [sinful nature] is destroying its fruit, not growing and proclaiming the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).
- d. Sinful desires doom the soul to defeat, sorrow, brokenness and eventually to eternal separation from God.

**Thought 1.** The exhortation is strong: believers must abstain from fleshly lusts or desires, for they war against the soul.

**Mat 5:29** *“If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.”*

**Rom 6:6** *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

**Rom 13:14** *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

**Gal 5:16** *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

**Col 3:5** *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

**1 Th 4:3** *It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.*

**1 Th 5:22** *Avoid every kind of evil.*

*1 Pet 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

*1 Pet 4:2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

### **III. 1 Peter 02:12 Witness to the World**

Abstain from evil, sinful desires because unbelievers are watching you. The world watches everything a genuine believer does. If a person really follows Christ — if he is genuine — then the world watches. This is the reason for this exhortation: we must live good lives before the world, always abstaining from evil desires.

The word “good” (kalos) means a good life, a life that is honourable, righteous, pure, lovely, decent, excellent, upright and noble. It means a life that is without blame, that cannot be justly or accurately blamed with any sin or evil. The world watches a genuine believer to see if he really lives what he professes. Therefore, we must live good lives, lives that are just what we profess: holy, righteous and pure. Note two reasons why:

1. Unbelievers accuse believers of doing wrong. Some will always accuse genuine believers. If a person really lives for Christ, his righteous and self-denying life convicts those who love the world and its pleasures and possessions. Therefore, they talk about, joke, mock, ridicule, abuse and persecute the believer when they can.

The point is this: the believer must never add fuel to the fire. He must never give the world a chance to justly accuse and down him. The believer must abstain from evil, sinful desires: he must live a good life, do exactly what he proclaims and professes.

2. Unbelievers must have a chance to be saved. If we live bad and fleshly lives — go against all that we proclaim and stand for — then unbelievers will know we are hypocrites. They will not be attracted to Christ. We must, therefore, live for Christ and do good works. When unbelievers see our righteous lives and good deeds, they will experience the day of God’s visitation and glorify God. The day God visits us means two things:

=> the day a man is visited by God to bring the man to repentance and salvation.

=> the day God will visit the earth for final judgment.

The day of visitation is the day of God’s inspection and salvation, the day when He saves a man. It is also the day when He returns to earth as Saviour and Lord. The idea is that unbelievers will be won to Christ by our good lives and glorify God in the great day when He shall visit the earth.

*Mat 5:16 “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

**1 Th 1:8** *The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia — your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it.*

**1 Tim 4:12** *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.*

**Titus 2:7** *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness.*

**James 2:18** *But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.*

**James 3:13** *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.*

**1 Pet 2:12** *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

**2 Pet 3:10-12** *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ■*