

1 Peter 2

Read 1 Peter 2:1-2: Being holy and purposeful is a process. It is work of the Holy Spirit in us. It begins by being reinvented in our purposes and passions. Peter is writing to new believers. New believers are being compared to newborn babies. There is a process of breaking away from the gravity of this world; and our old nature. We are vulnerable and ignorant and self-absorbed. We are like babies in some respects. Babies need pure milk to grow and be healthy. The fundamentals of faith found in the scriptures are referred to as milk.

It is not always apparent as to what is going on inside of us. The old ways never completely go away. New believers can throw fits; and they often want their own way. They are not circumspect in their thinking. They only think of their own desires. A daily time meditating on God's word is what will stabilize and transform us. New believers need the untainted gospel and scripture to be fed; and to grow up in Christ. At some point the selfishness decreases; and disciplined thinking and an others-orientation begins. The scriptures are mind-changing. New believers look very similar to unbelievers.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ² I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³ for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking ^[a] like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? (1 Corinthians 3:1-4)

Why would God teach us the deeper things of Christ, if we refuse to obey the basics? We need to judge/evaluate ourselves. We have to take a look at where our natural state is; and where we are targeting to become like. Which group of characteristics do you most-closely resemble?

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: ^[i]immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, ^[i]factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:19-23)

We probably have a mixture of both characteristics in our lives. Trying to beat back our old nature may have temporary and outward affect; but ultimately will

fail. Instead, our only option is to displace our natural thought process with the mind of Christ (found in the scriptures).

...because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you^[a] free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh (Romans 8:2-3)

Christians in a continuous cycle of failure can be traced back to not continuing in the word daily and continuously.

...walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)

We are like cups filled with sinful inclinations. That never changes. When we fill ourselves with the things of God's Spirit it dilutes our internal content. Instead of 100% evil intentions we might become 50% worshipful and willing to serve God.

Do not let me wander from Your commandments. ¹¹ Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You. (Psalm 119)

Unfortunately our spiritual intentions fade; and we are repeatedly left with our old nature. That is why we must keep prayerfully meditating on God's word. God wants some face time; not religion. Moses was our Old Testament example of how a man's face can literally radiate a reflection of God's glory.

But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, ³⁵ the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him. (Exodus 34:34)

Like us; Moses' face also would stop shining as he was away from time alone with God.

...the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, (2 Corinthians 3:7)

1 Peter 2:3-8: Jesus is the cornerstone of the church. He is our example towards God, and also towards our fellow man. The church is described here as living stones, which form a temple. In masonry construction the corner block in the first course is laid out per the horizontal and vertical controls. The cornerstone sets the pattern for the rest of the building. The world has rejected the direction and blueprints from God. We are the ones who took those plans, and are building our lives upon that set of plans. Visualize string lines going out from the corner in

both horizontal directions. Jesus displayed horizontal controls in how he was among men. Jesus also displayed vertical alignment as he only lined up with the Father. Think of righteousness as a vertical line coming straight down from heaven... like a plumb line-coming straight down to earth. Think of love and truth towards our fellow man as horizontal lines for us to lay our lives upon here on earth. The Ten Commandments consist of 4 laws that have to do with loving and respecting God; and 6 laws that have to do with living around other men.

In other words; Jesus laid out the direction to build the church up. His life and the words of our Father laid out the direction for us on earth, and in heaven.

Therefore thus says the Lord ^[a]GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, ^[o]firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be ^[p]disturbed. ¹⁷ "I will make justice the measuring line And righteousness the level; (Isaiah 28:16-17)

Lovingkindness and ^[i]truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. ¹¹ ^[j]Truth springs from the earth, And righteousness looks down from heaven. (Psalm 85:10)

The apostles and prophets were considered the first layer (foundation) of living stones; on whose shoulders we stand.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the ^[p]saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy ^[q]temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-21)

All men have to deal with Jesus. Jesus is an unmovable stone that we can either rest on; or crash into.

- We are supposed to build our lives upon him as our rock.
- Those who try to get around his message stumble; because they are in darkness. He is a stumbling stone to those who want to bypass righteous living. Living in the dark and falling down are generally how sinners live.
- Those people and nations who refuse to accept Jesus for who the Father tells us he is - will be crushed by the living stone that comes down from heaven.

In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be ^[av]left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

⁴⁵ *Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place ^[aw] in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.* (Daniel 2:44-45)

Read 1 Peter 2:9-12: God has called us to become part of a special tribe of people without physical lineage or ancestry. Our spiritual family has both Jews and Gentiles included in it. God used Abraham to start a physical nation (Israel), and a spiritual nation of multi-racial believers as well.

No longer will you be called Abram^[b]; your name will be Abraham,^[c] for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷ I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. (Genesis 17:5-7)

We are also priests according to a family that cannot be traced through DNA. It is as though we are from another planet. We do not fit in here. We are like fish out of water. We have a heavenly citizenship now.

For our ^[m] citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform ^[n] the body of our humble state into conformity with ^[o] the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21)

Jesus began the Melchizidek priesthood. This is a unique priesthood based on the work of Christ. We are servant priests under Jesus. Melchizidek was used as an Old Testament priest who mysteriously pops up in Abraham's life. He is a good example of being a one-of-a-kind priest. He did not come from any inheritance or lineage. In other words; we are in a spiritual priesthood; not part of an earthly family bloodline.

Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."^[u] ⁶ And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." (Hebrews 5:5-6)

This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, ² and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace."³ Without

father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever. (Hebrews 7:1-3)

The Hebrew priesthood through the sons of Aaron (Levitical priesthood) became corrupt and uninspired. Jesus is not part of that kind of priesthood. He arrived on the scene, untainted by sin and failed legalistic traditions.

If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? ¹² For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also. ¹³ He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴ For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. ¹⁵ And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, ¹⁶ one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷ For it is declared: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 7:11-18)

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits^[a] before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 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. (Revelation 1:5-6)

We are called sojourners (pilgrims) because we are not completely at home in this present world. It does not fit our tastes. This world is a place that has been contaminated with sin. It is hostile to our world views. Abraham and the saints of old were all characterized as wanderers, not finding what they were looking for here on earth. We feel like we are surrounded by spiritual zombies as we watch the public views on the evening news. It does not make any sense to us. It almost seems like we are surrounded by people who have been hypnotized to resist all things of God.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. ¹⁵ And indeed if they had been ^[1]thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly

one. Therefore God is not ^[m]ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16)

Read 1 Peter 2:13-17: Despite our disconnection with this world, we are still called to live here and make an impact. Otherwise we would be in heaven already. We cannot make an impact on others if we live like monks or isolationists.

We are to be good examples of law-abiding citizens. Our lives are a platform for the gospel. Being a law-abiding citizen is not the same as being in agreement with all government policies. We are not to agree with the transgender laws or the Muslim plurality or to embrace the partial-birth abortion laws. God provides our leaders for our protections. Generally speaking, we are protected from abuses of others by our government; and we are not forced to follow their behaviors.

Every ^[a]person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except ^[b]from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore ^[c]whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³ For rulers are not a cause of fear for ^[d]good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴ for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷ Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (Romans 13:1-7)

Peter and Paul wrote these things during a time when Imperialistic Rome enslaved and seized control of most of the known world. The Cesar's were very evil men. We will win more people to Christ being solid citizens than to be insurrectionists.

Then the Pharisees went and ^[g]plotted together how they might trap Him ^[h]in what He said. ¹⁶ And they *sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and ^[i]defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. ¹⁷ Tell us then, what do You think? Is it ^[j]lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus perceived their ^[k]malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a ^[l]denarius. ²⁰ And He *said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" ²¹ They *said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He *said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and

to God the things that are God's." ²² And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away. (Matthew 22:15-22)

We are to pay our taxes in full and on time, and we are to abide by the laws. Those are government requirements. We are to give our lives to God, since we were made in his image.

The concept of submitting to authority is consistent with righteous living. Our honor for our heavenly father will probably be consistent to our honor for: our earthly father, our employer, the police, etc... People do not want to be told that there are absolutes and things that are clearly wrong. They will do their best to discredit the opposing voice of authority. In doing so, they have become legalistic about the environment and providing free speech for trans-genders, etc..

And when ^[e] Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, ⁶ and saying, "^[f] Lord, my ^[g] servant is ^[h] lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented." ⁷ Jesus *said to him, "I will come and heal him." ⁸ But the centurion said, "^[i] Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just ^[j] say the word, and my ^[k] servant will be healed. ⁹ For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." ¹⁰ Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith ^[l] with anyone in Israel. (Matthew 8:5-10)

Read 1 Peter 2:18-20: It is interesting that the scriptures included those who were at the lowest socio-economic ladder. Slaves are instructed to be good examples for their masters.

The Old Testament reference to slaves was frequently in reference to debt-slaves. Starving people would beg to be fed and cared for...or to have a debt released in exchange for up to 7 years of service. Slavery was also a fact of life in the Roman Empire. Some masters were brutal or sexually-abused their slaves.

The widespread attitude towards slaves was that they were lazy. In contrast, the scriptures call for faithfulness and diligence for our masters; as if we were working for God. Even the most moral and fair bosses have human weaknesses and faults. We all want to migrate away from the harder parts of daily living.

We can become bitter and feel that we are short-changed when we build up expectations towards our human employers. The only sure way to approach the work day is to dedicate your service unto God. The office politics and under-appreciation will matter much less. Doing what is right will be clarified. Roll up

your sleeves and attack the opportunities that God puts in front of you. I have found that I will frequently do not have a long-term plan to execute; but I will have plenty to keep me busy during the day. We should not be procrastinators.

Whatever you do, do your work ^[w]heartily, as for the Lord ^[x]rather than for men, (Romans 3:23)

The work place can be more illuminating than other aspects of life. People can talk a good game; but performance can be a different story. We can see the laziness of men when we work closely with them. We can become embittered with their lack of consideration. We carry the poison within ourselves when we despise other men for their transgressions. They can probably sense that we are not happy; but they have no idea how much thought that we are devoting to their choices and manner of living. Praying for those who take advantage of us is actually a great remedy for bitterness. Otherwise we will bemoan ongoing diaper duty. Sometimes praying for others will make us suddenly get along better with them.

...love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may ^[ap]be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Therefore ^[aq]you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:44-48)

Read 1 Peter 2:21-25: Jesus is our example. He did not cry “foul”. He did not complain, or even-the-score through back-stabbing. He lived with numerous mischaracterizations. We do not need to scheme and usurp and defraud in ensure that we get what is coming to us. We merely have to accept it and live according to it. We should live similarly to deaf people. We should block out the street conversations and advertising filth. We should not engage in the vile jokes and coarse suggestions. We should be focused on our daily mission. Our actions should speak volumes.

The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient Nor did I turn back. ⁶ I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. ⁷ For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed. ⁸ He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. ⁹ Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me; (Isaiah 50:5-9)

I have found that when I try to vindicate myself, that it does not go well. It is better to let God be my advocate. Somehow that works out far better.