

The Book of 1 Peter Study Guide

Chapter 2

Peter continues his authoritative exhortation to the believers in Asia (modern day Turkey) who are experiencing ever-increasing suffering due to persecution. This chapter begins with some practical implications regarding his closing comments in chapter 1, namely that human beings fade away like grass, but the Word of the Lord abides forever.

2:1-8

v 1 The first implication is that spiritual growth is essential for enduring trials. A believer cannot be content with their salvation or current understanding of God's Word. And that begins with purging out harmful behaviors, represented here by malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander.

v 2 Peter first acknowledges their needs for spiritual maturity by calling them newborn babes. And, as such, that means needing the pure milk of the Word, just like the need of a baby.

The word translated as "long" or "desire" (*epipotheō*) conveys a strong craving. The Septuagint uses that word in its translation of Psalm 42:1 –

"As the deer pants (longs) for the water brooks, so my soul pants (longs) for You, O God.

This understanding, then, serves as an indicator of spiritual growth. Can you say that you have a desire or a strong craving for the Word of God, by seeking to know everything it contains, and how to apply it?

v 3 This spiritual hunger is driven by having already "tasted" the goodness and grace of the Lord, which implies believers today as well.

v 4-6 He shifts to a metaphor of living stones and a spiritual house, based on a quotation of Isaiah 28:16. Believers are told to come to Yeshua, who is the original "living stone"—cast aside by humanity but chosen and highly precious to God. Then, by connecting to Him, believers themselves become "living stones" who are built up collectively into a spiritual house. And this spiritual house, like the temple in Jerusalem, functions as a holy priesthood dedicated to offering spiritual sacrifices that please God through Yeshua.

v 7-8 He shows that it all depends on our response to who Yeshua is. For those who believe, he quotes Psalm 118:22, which foretells Yeshua being the chief cornerstone. So, by trusting in Him, it ensures that a believer will never be put to shame.

But, for unbelievers who reject Yeshua as the cornerstone of their lives, by quoting Isaiah 8:14, that same stone becomes a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." That is a picture of tripping and falling because of willful disobedience to God's message, just as the builders, meaning the leaders of Israel, rejected Yeshua and fell from their place of authority a short time later.

Summing this up, Peter identifies three key elements for genuine spiritual growth:

- **Sanctification:** It requires a deliberate choice to replace worldly malice with scriptural truth.
- **Community:** It requires a faith that is not practiced in isolation, but, instead, results from individual “stones” being structurally knit together to form God’s household.
- **Messiah-centricity:** Yeshua must be at the center of everything we do, and that means we will experience Him being the dividing of our relationships, for He will bring honor to those who trust Him and judgment to those who reject Him.

Making a commitment and practicing those three elements will significantly determine whether we will grow spiritually as individuals and as a congregation.

Peter now moves on to describe the attributes of this metaphor of the spiritual house.

And we have to keep in mind that the recipients of this letter are a blending of Jewish and Gentile believers in Yeshua.

2:9-12

v 9 He identifies this mixed group of believers as:

- **A chosen race or generation (*genos eklekton*).** The Greek word *genos* refers to offspring, kinship, or family. Its usage implies a shared spiritual lineage. Thus, through Yeshua, Gentile believers are not merely adopting a philosophy; they are legally adopted into the family line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And that reality erases worldly ethnic divisions to create “one new humanity” (Ephesians 2:15), giving believers the security of a permanent family identity
- **A royal priesthood (*basileion hierateuma*).** In ancient Israel, the monarchy (Judah) and the priesthood (Levi) were strictly separated. Only the Messiah could perfectly hold both offices (Zechariah 6:13). So, because believers are “in Messiah,” who is the ultimate King and High Priest, we inherit a dual status. That implies believers have direct access to the heavenly Holy of Holies without needing a human intermediary.
- **A holy nation (*ethnos hagion*).** Just as Israel was meant to be a distinct entity governed exclusively by God’s Torah, and looking completely different from the pagan nations, believers must live a counter-cultural lifestyle defined by God’s standards of righteousness.
- **A people for God’s own possession (*laos eis peripoiesin*).** This points directly to the Hebrew concept of *Am Segulah*—God’s private, precious treasure hidden away for safekeeping (Malachi 3:17). This term implies absolute ownership and immense value because we are bought at a high price—the blood of Yeshua. And because God owns us, He protects us strongly.

Peter is not advocating for Israel’s replacement by the Church. Instead, he is intentionally applying Israel’s ancient, foundational Sinai descriptions (Exodus 19:5-6) to a unified body of Jewish and Gentile believers in Yeshua. And we have to remember, that even in ancient Israel, citizenship included both native-born or ethnic Jews and *gerim*, literally meaning Gentile aliens who became part of the nation by faith. So, Peter is merely describing the people of God as it always was intended to be, but now has become a reality because of the life-changing power of Yeshua.

v 10 Peter shows how this reality is the fulfillment of prophecy by Hosea. Historically, Hosea spoke of the exiled, paganized Northern Kingdom of Israel being restored. So, by using Hosea's words "*lo-ammi* – not My people" (1:10) and "*lo-ruhamah* – no mercy" (2:23), Yeshua has both reclaimed the scattered of Israel and brought near the Gentiles who were once completely outside the covenants of promise, allowing both to receive divine mercy (*rachamim*).

v 11-12 See the article "*Peter's Audience in Relation to Ancient Israel.*"

In the next section of his letter, Peter instructs believers on how to live righteously under worldly authorities and harsh circumstances,

using submission and endurance as a testament to their faith.

His words are in perfect harmony with Paul's teaching in Romans 13.

2:13-20

v 13 His call to submit to every human institution is an echo of Paul's words in Romans 13:1 that "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God." Again, just as it was earlier with Paul, at this time, there was no righteous king anywhere, and the governing authorities of Rome were oppressive and brutal.

v 14 Rulers are sent by God to punish wrongdoers and honor those who do good.

v 15 By doing good, believers silence the ignorant and foolish accusations made against them by outsiders.

v 16 He shows that believers possess genuine spiritual freedom. But freedom must never be used as a cover-up or excuse for doing evil. Instead, true freedom means living responsibly as willing servants of God.

v 17 He provides a concise social code for daily life:

- Honor everyone.
- Love the family of believers.
- Fear God.
- Honor the king (representative of all authorities)

v 18 He extends that respect for authority to servant/master relationships, even those that are unreasonable (*skolios* – "crooked or warped").

v 19-20 There is no credit for enduring punishment when you actually do wrong. However, patiently enduring suffering for doing good is commendable and pleases God.

Ultimately, when we compare the two teachings, Paul writes in Romans from a structural perspective, explaining why government exists in God's orderly universe. Peter, on the other hand, writes from a pastoral perspective, explaining how to survive under a government or social structure that may actively mistreat you.

2:21-25

- v 21 Peter shows that submission to authority, even harsh and oppressive authority, is reflection of the way that Yeshua suffered, even though He had done nothing wrong
- v 22-23 He quotes from Isaiah 53, confirming that Yeshua committed no sin, and no deceit or lies ever came out of His mouth. And when Yeshua was verbally abused and insulted, He did not insult in return. Moreover, while suffering physically on the cross, He made no threats against His executioners. Instead of taking revenge, Yeshua completely entrusted Himself and His situation to God, who judges fairly and righteously.
- v 24 He describes the substitutionary atonement accomplished by Yeshua when He personally carried humanity's sins in His own body onto the cross. He died so that believers might die to the power of sin and live lives characterized by righteousness. And Peter continues echoing Isaiah 53:4 by showing how through Yeshua's physical wounds (KJV – "stripes"), believers receive spiritual healing and restoration.
- v 25 Lastly, he builds on the straying sheep metaphor of Isaiah 53:6, by showing that through Messiah's suffering, believers have now been brought back to the Shepherd and Guardian (*episkopos* – "overseer, bishop") of their souls.