

**Women's Bible Study of 1 & 2 Peter**  
**Lesson 6 / 1 Peter 2:4-10 Notes**  
**God's Kindness Revealed in the Believer's Privileges**

It has been said that gratitude is the most powerful stimulant to Christian growth. The more the believer comes to cherish his inheritance in Christ, the more effective his witness will be. Sadly, many believers view the Christian life primarily through the lense of duty, becoming preoccupied with the difficulty they experience in following the Lord. They may have started the Christian life out with a deep sense of gratitude, but as time progresses they soon find themselves drowning in a sea of self-focus, discouragement, and joylessness. This should not be!

As we have seen with Peter so far, the apostle's passion is that believers would come to experience the joy of following the Lord, even in the midst of severe adversity. The apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is pleading with believers to recognize the blessings they possess, and to allow hope and a keen awareness of God's grace to empower them to lovingly sacrifice their lives for the Savior's glory. In our passage for this week, it is obvious that Peter continues to build on these larger themes, yet he moves into more specifics regarding the believer's blessings and privileges. It is as though he is merely proving further and expounding upon the truth that he has just mentioned in vs. 3: ***Christians, above all people, have tasted that the Lord is kind!***

In the text for this week, we will see the apostle using vivid imagery and bold metaphors to emphasize his points. Through these we will not only gain a greater glimpse into the depth of Old Testament knowledge Peter possessed, but more importantly we will see that Christ is indeed the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the Chief Cornerstone! As we move along through the passage, let us continually keep this truth at the forefront of our minds: ***As New Testament believers we have been graced with nearly unfathomable privileges, given to us by God solely as a result of our union with Jesus.***

## Privilege Defined

Webster's dictionary defines privilege as a right, advantage, favor, or immunity granted to some person, group of persons, or class, not enjoyed by others and sometimes detrimental to them. As a parent, I can recall granting certain privileges to our children at times that were meant to motivate them towards greater faithfulness. Maybe it was the privilege of getting to stay up late, or as they got older the privilege of using the family car. Whatever the case, typically privileges were special rights that we as parents chose to bless our children with, and of course at times, were taken away to help them grow.

The privileges outlined in our passage are similar to this, and yet different. God, as a loving Father, chose us before the foundation of the world to be His children, granting us the ability to come to Christ for salvation! But not only did he grant us salvation from the punishment of our sins, He granted us salvation from the dominating, all- encompassing effects of our sin, so that we might offer our lives joyfully as living sacrifices. (Rom. 6:18, 12:1) (John 15:8-11)

## Who we were before obtaining our privilege:

### Dead stones vs. living stones

To most fully grasp what I Peter 1:4-10 is teaching, we must first consider the condition in which this saving grace has found us. The concept of a living stone is a daring metaphor not only for Christ, but also for us. To place the word living with the word stone, seems oxymoronic, for it is no hidden reality that stones do not live. But Peter is getting at a glorious truth here. The word stone used in the passage refers to a "building stone." When applied to Christ, it conveys the idea of a stone "that was perfectly designed, shaped and hewn out to become the cornerstone (foundation) of the church" (Macarthur), the ***church being the spiritual, living temple that God himself is building***. Christ proclaimed in Matt. 21:42, Mark 4:10, and Luke 20:17 that He was the fulfillment of Psalm 118:22 which states, "*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.*" But going further we see that while he was the cornerstone, he was

also the living cornerstone, the overcomer of death and the only source of life to all who will come to him.

As many of us learned in our study last year, life is a huge theme throughout the book of John. “To say Jesus is the life is to say the most pure truth about the nature of God that he possesses.” (Macarthur) As John spoke of repeatedly, the life that Jesus possesses and ultimately came to give, is the true life, and the greatest need humanity has. To understand this most desperate need one does not have to go too far in Scripture to grasp that man’s relationship with God was broken by sin and in need of reconciliation. But going further, and linking this need to life, Scripture is clear that man’s sin and ultimate depravity placed him in the most desperate of situations- ***spiritually dead*** and totally separated from God.

The Scriptures are full of references to the spiritual death that man possesses. According to Col. 2:13 and Eph.2:1 we were “dead in our trespasses and sins.” Eph. 2:12 says that “we were alienated from the life of God... and had no hope and were without God in the world.” “Rom. 1:28 speaks of the truth that men naturally ‘do not like to retain God in their knowledge,’ and in Job 21:14 and Is. 30:11 we see that the language of man’s heart is ‘Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.’” (Brown) And lest we forget, the most basic result of the fall was the fulfillment of God’s declaration that if Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit they would die. Clearly, in these passages and throughout the whole Bible we see that humanity, apart from God’s grace, is spiritually dead, or for the sake of our passage, a dead stone as opposed to a living stone.

### **In darkness as opposed to light**

Secondly, believers were in darkness before they were brought into His marvelous light. This darkness referred to has moral ramifications and conveys the idea of being entirely unable to see or do what is right (Jer. 17:9, Rom. 8:7-8) They are literally ignorant regarding the things of God, and trapped in this most hopeless, and worsening (Eph. 4:22) state. Yet not only does humanity fail to perceive and walk in godliness, the Bible actually says they choose to love their darkness rather than God’s light. Jesus speaks directly about this in John 3:19-20

when he says, *“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”* John 3:19-20 Indeed, the very worst manifestation of man’s heart being darkened was and still is, mankind’s rejection of God’s provision for our salvation: the gift of Jesus.

### **Not a people**

While the previous conditions mentioned refer to believers more individually, this phrase seems to reference them more corporately, as a body. Prior to obtaining their salvation, Christians quite simply were not the people of God. They did not belong to any society dedicated to promoting God’s glory or upholding his holiness. Eph. 2:12 speaks of this quite bluntly when it says, *“remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”* The great theologian, John Brown, a hero of Charles Spurgeon wrote, *“They were not, properly speaking, at all ‘a people;’ they were so base and miserable as not to deserve the name of ‘a people.’ Men in their natural state are incapable of the highest form of social relation, that of being members of the holy commonwealth, subjects of the heavenly kingdom. They are rather a heard of outlaws, a band of rebels, than a properly organized people.”*

### **Had not obtained mercy**

Scripture references mercy in two ways. First, there is a general mercy which is evident in all of God’s creation, whereby God displays forbearance, pity, and compassion to sinners, despite the fact that he has every right to destroy them. This mercy would be related to the concept of common grace. It is important to remember that while a blessing of God, general mercy is only temporary, and will expire for those who do not believe. The second type referenced is divine, saving mercy, which encompasses general mercy also, but includes so much more. This is what is written in our passage. Believers are recipients of God’s salvation because He, motivated by his pity and compassion, withholds the wrath that is due them. Without this, all people stand condemned

before God with no hope of eternal escape, and this is exactly who believers were before God saved them.

### **The means by which believers came to possess their privileges**

#### **We come to Christ**

The Greek word for come in our passage is *proserchomenoi*, a compound verb used recurrently in the Old Testament to refer to the idea of drawing near to God to hear him speak, or to come into His presence in the tabernacle to offer sacrifices. (Lev. 9:5, Deut. 4:11, 5:27, Ex. 12:48, 16:19) In the book of Hebrews we see this verb used frequently to refer to “drawing near” to God in worship. Peter, by using this word, seems to be foreshadowing a truth that he will only make more explicit as the passage unfolds: believers in Christ enjoy privileges reserved only for Old Testament priests, and going further are privileged to experience it in a much fuller sense. It is also important to note that Peter’s use of *proserchomenoi* conveys the truth that genuine believers come to Christ for salvation, with the intention of remaining in his presence to pursue ongoing fellowship with him. There is a very real sense in which this verb implies movement of the whole person into the life of Christ. Jesus had this truth in mind when he said, “*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls.*” Matt. 11:28 Here we see, it is only by coming to Christ and *remaining in him* that the troubled soul can find true rest, and ultimately according to our passage, as we **come** to Christ continually, we consequently find our lives more and more united to Him, which in turn enables us to bear fruit. This concept is also what Jesus was referring to in John 15:1-11, when he spoke of abiding in the vine. The parallel images of “abiding in the vine” and “coming to Jesus as the living stone” should be noted, for both express vital truths for every believer.

#### **We believe in Christ**

Coming to Christ, and believing in Christ, are terms mentioned together in Scripture at times, causing some to think of them as synonymous expressions. (John 6:35) Yet while these terms are similar and both descriptive of the true

Christian, there is a clear distinction in their meaning. The Greek word for believe that Peter uses is *pisteuousin*, which means “to be persuaded of and hence to place one’s confidence and reliance upon.” (Vines) The word connotes the idea that there has been satisfactory testimony to count the proposition as true, and with relationship to Christ, one has reckoned His claims as faithful and worthy of acceptance. (Brown)

In Heb. 11:6 we see the use of come and believe used in a sense that clarifies how they work together. It says, *“He that comes to God, must believe that he is and that he is the rewarder of all who diligently seek Him.”* In other words, to come to Christ, one must first believe that He is who He says He is, and have placed their trust in Him alone. Peter is eager to point out to his readers that the One whom believers come to and believe in, is indeed the chosen, precious, living cornerstone promised in Scripture. He draws from Isaiah 28:16 which says, “Behold I am the one who has laid a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation: Whoever believes will not be in haste.” It is important to note that Peter’s reference to Christ as the cornerstone, is a truth He emphatically had come to believe, and was passionate for others to understand. He had a phenomenal grasp of the Old Testament and consequently was in awe of the way Christ fulfilled it. (Ps. 118:22, Zech. 10:4, Acts 4:11) This belief that Christ was the cornerstone was shared by all of the other apostles, and was a truth Jesus had proclaimed plainly about Himself. (Matt. 21:42, Mark 12:1-11, Luke 20:18, Rom. 9:30-33, I Cor. 10:4)

### **We were chosen**

By using the statement “you are a chosen generation” Peter takes the opportunity to remind his readers again that the privileges they possess are ***solely*** a gift of God’s grace, and not something they could have obtained on their own. In John 6: 35-45 Jesus makes it clear that the ability to come and believe only occurs because the Christian has been chosen by the Father. In understanding this truth, it is also helpful to recall the state in which grace first found them: dead in their sins, in darkness, not a people, and without mercy. Only God can raise

people from the dead, give life, place them into His marvelous light, make them a people, and grant mercy.

### **The Believer's Privileges Defined**

#### **We become living stones built into a temple (or spiritual house)**

As we believe in Jesus and come to Him as the living cornerstone we become united to Him. One result of this union is that just as He is a living stone, we become living stones, building blocks, as it were, of God's holy temple. This was likely a new concept for Peter's readers, for their primary frame of reference would have been the Old Testament. Prior to Christ, the temple represented, among other things, the place where God's presence dwelt. MacArthur speaking of this says, "As a believing Jew, the apostle Peter realized the New Testament economy was different from the Old in terms of God's presence with believers. In the old economy, God's temple, representing His presence, was a temporal, material house; but in the new, believers are *being built up as a spiritual house* that supercedes any material building. They constitute God's spiritual temple which Paul called 'the household of God which is the church of the living God.' The writer of Hebrews further identifies the spiritual house in this fashion: 'Christ was faithful as a Son over His house- whose house we are.'" (Heb. 3:6) As one reflects on these deep truths, it is only natural to question why God would choose to dwell in mere men, sinful as they are. The only answer to this resides in the grace of God and the power of our union with Christ, by which God sees us clothed in the righteousness of our Savior.

#### **We become a holy and royal priesthood who offer spiritual sacrifices through Christ**

Peter continues to build upon the temple concept when he says that believers are a holy and royal priesthood. The depth of this truth goes much farther than we can cover, but to put it simply, as priests, believers do not offer animal sacrifices as in the Old Covenant, but spiritual sacrifices, defined in the New Testament in various ways. Rom 12:1 says that we are to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, meaning we give our lives in service to God. Other sacrifices

believers are called to offer are: lips that praise His name (Heb. 13:15), gifts to aid the spread of the Gospel (Phil. 4:18), doing good and sharing (Heb. 13:16), the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart. (Ps 51:17), the sacrifice of our desires for others, (Eph.5:2) and prayer. (Rev. 8:3) These activities reveal that spiritual sacrifices vary widely, and are merely examples, showing that anything we do out of love and service **to Christ** can be offered. This has actually always been God's heart for his people. Even going back to Israel, God had told them His heart for them was that they would be a kingdom of priests, yet this was contingent upon their obedience. (Ex. 19:6) Sadly, God's desires for the nation of Israel have not yet been realized due to their unbelief and disobedience, but one glorious day in the future will come to fruition! Finally, the truth that believers are a royal priesthood reminds us that we are united to a royal priest and king, Jesus Christ Himself, and as such we will be privileged to rule with him in the coming messianic kingdom alongside the restored nation of Israel. (Rev. 5:10)

### **We become a holy nation and a people for His own possession**

In Exodus 19:6 God revealed to Israel that not only did He have a heart for them to be a kingdom of priests, but also a special treasure to Him and a holy nation. These titles represented divine blessings of God, whereby God's people would be His special representatives on the earth set apart to do His purposes, and in a very personal sense would belong to Him. These blessings were not mere titles, for they also had significant moral ramifications for the Israelite's conduct. If Israel would have truly kept the first commandment to only love the Lord, the rest would have followed. Sadly, while God always preserved a remnant, the nation itself was ridden with apostasy and idol worship, so God's promise could not come to fruition. But, the good news for us is that this paved the way for the church to become a holy nation and a people for God's own possession! Because of our union with Jesus, we are clothed in His righteousness and filled with God's Spirit that enables us to love and obey from the heart! (Ez. 36:26) Corporately we become a holy nation of Christ's ambassadors, God's own representatives on the earth (2 Cor. 5:20), that belong solely to Him.



### **We become proclaimers of His excellency**

As God's holy and special people, believers are called to proclaim the excellencies of Christ. The Greek word for proclaim is *exangeilete*, appearing only here in the New Testament, but likely used by Peter with a view towards Isaiah 43:21 which refers to God's people being formed to "declare his praise." The verb *exangeilete* means to publish or advertise something that has previously been unknown, namely the excellencies of Christ- His worthiness, perfection, and pre-eminence. Christians, of all people, are most blessed by God, and the only humans capable of extolling the worth of Christ. Peter is emphatic that his readers understand their honorable position and responsibility.

### **We are called out of darkness into His marvelous light**

As was mentioned earlier, prior to being awakened to salvation the believer was trapped in darkness, a truly hopeless position. He had no capability to even discern good from evil, let alone do any good that would honor God. But God, by His grace, saw fit to rescue and deliver, transferring those who trust in Christ to His kingdom of light. (Col. 1:13) No longer are believers trapped in the vicious cycles of sin and darkness. They are given Christ's light which illuminates their minds to discern good from evil, know truth, and apply it to their lives. Truly, the change that happens is a miraculous transformation of man's entire being from the inside out.

### **We become a people who receive mercy**

Peter concludes his section on privileges with the reminder that at one-time believers stood condemned before God, alienated from His divine favor. They were unholy, not regarded as a people, and not receivers of His mercy. But God, according to His mercy, had seen fit to save them from their desperate position. He awakened them to new life, forgave their sins, removed their guilt, eliminated their judgment, and had made them a holy people. Ultimately, all of this was accomplished solely through Jesus Christ, the once and for all sacrifice sent by the Father, a tangible expression of God's incomprehensible love.

## **We are honored**

Many translations of verse 7 say “to you therefore who believe He is precious,” but the more accurate translation seems to be “to you therefore who believe is honor.” Grudem This seems to fit the context best, because Peter is contrasting believers with unbelievers who will ultimately be put to shame for their rejection of Christ. Believers, coming to the Cornerstone, are highly esteemed in God’s eyes, solely because of their union to Jesus, and one day will fully experience the glorious result of being in Christ.

## **The ruin of those who forfeit privilege by rejecting Christ**

Instead of finding life and union with Christ, the living cornerstone, unbelievers find Him offensive, and stumble at His words. Peter references three passages from the Old Testament to emphasize these truths (Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, and Isaiah 8:14) making the point clear that each person’s response to Christ, is actually a fulfillment of prophecy. The fact that some find eternal life at Christ’s appearing, and others eternal damnation was predicted. For those who reject Christ, he is like a large stone in the road with causes them to fall, and never get up. They were destined to this because of their unbelief and disobedience to the Word. Some have minimized the nature of the word “disobedient” used here, *apietheio*, saying it simply means “to not obey.” Yet the context of the passage and the whole of Scripture seem to express more. Being disobedient to the Word, they are actually living their lives in rebellion against God, even actively engaged in opposing the truth. They reject the Gospel willfully, and will be held accountable at the second coming.

The accountability for the unbeliever will ultimately come when Christ returns to judge the earth (Rev. 20:11-15). This great and terrible event will reveal the true nature of men’s hearts, when the books will be opened that contain records of each one’s deeds, whether they are good or evil, and God determines the ultimate outcome of men’s souls. ***Standing before Christ, there will only be two kinds of people: unbelievers who will be judged by their works and believers who will be judged by Christ’s works.*** This final judgment will usher in a time of unfathomable blessing for those who know Christ, showing the honor

that has been reserved for them. In contrast, for the unbeliever the shame that is theirs, due to their hardness of heart shown in their rejection of Christ, will be an eternal, devastating consequence none can truly fathom.

#### Conclusion:

For the believer, there can be no other worthy response to God's mercy and grace than a humble response of praise and gratitude! God's kindness, shown in our salvation privileges, goes beyond the scope of our human ability to fully grasp, yet because of the Spirit we can, even now, taste and experience the kindness of the Lord. While it is easy to get caught up in our difficult circumstances, the Spirit is always directing us to a higher view of our Savior, for it is only because of His life and sacrifice that we have been granted these blessed privileges. May the kindness we have tasted in our union with Christ, motivate us to become more grateful, and also more intentional, in living our lives for God's glory while we wait for the second coming of our Lord.

1. John Macarthur, *The Macarthur New Testament Commentary*, I Peter 2:4-5.
2. John Macarthur, *The Macarthur New Testament Commentary*, John 1:1-5.
3. John Brown, *The Geneva Series of Commentaries*, I Peter Volume 1, I Peter 2:4-10.
4. Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words
5. Wayne Grudem, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, I Peter.

