

1 Peter 2:1-12

1. A Living Stone

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. (Psalm 34:8)

Taste, in the Greek while it literally means to eat, it figuratively means to experience, to partake of and enjoy.

(Good – “chrestos” “to furnish what is suitable, useful”) – properly, useful (serviceable, productive); well-fitted (well-resourced); useful (beneficial, benevolent)

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture:

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"

8 and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

Realize that during these times in this part of world the strongest buildings were made of stone. Most dwellings and buildings were wood and straw but with age or fire or flood, they decayed and didn't stand the test of time. Those made of stone lasted and were passed on from generation to generation. These stones had to fit just right with each other.

When you started building, you chose the most perfectly square stone to lay at the corner of the building and the first two walls were aligned to that one stone. God uses Jesus as His cornerstone to align the first two walls of His Kingdom, the Jews and the Gentiles.

The Jews rejected Jesus, but God used Him as the foundation of a new Kingdom which would now include the Gentiles.

2. A Holy People

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

When Jesus died, God ripped the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple to signify that He would no longer limit Himself to that location to be ministered to by priests offering sacrifices once a year. In fact, at Pentecost, He poured out His Spirit on all flesh. Jesus fulfilled the need for sacrifices on the cross once and for all. There is now no more need for priests or for sacrifices. Because of that, all of us can now approach Him boldly and reverently without the need for a priest to intercede. So

we now are all priests ministering before the Lord and we are also royalty because we are co-heirs with Christ.

As the early church gained ground in Rome with Constantine, they modeled what they did on the Old Testament and reinstated the priesthood to offer a sacrifice on behalf of the people. That is literally what the Catholic mass is about. When they consecrate the elements, they believe that they literally become the body and blood of Jesus and they are presenting the sacrifice to God for the people. It is also the reason that Catholics have to confess their sins to a priest, so that then they can cover those sins at the altar when they present the sacrifice. The priest is the representative of God before the people and they gain access to God through Him.

Peter, whom they portray as the first Pope, is actually saying the opposite. We no longer need priests, because all who call on the name of Jesus is part of the royal priesthood, and we can go to God directly.

11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

The word here for sojourners is "paroikos" which means resident alien. We are here, but we are not of here. Another word that is used in this verse is "pilgrim" or a traveler who is on a journey to a holy place.

We are to live questionable lives. We are to behave in such a way that even those who attack us and accuse us can see God manifested in our lives through His visitation, that His testimony in our lives would lead them to come to Christ.

3. A Model to the World

1 Peter 2:13-25

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Understand that at this point in history, the Jews are seen in a very negative light as being rebellious and seditious. They are seen as troublemakers that instigate problems wherever they go, because they separate themselves, and judge the Gentiles. With the way that Rome has treated them is understandable and to an extent justifiable.

Yet, here is Peter, flying in the face of the way that the Jews view Rome and their oppression, telling Christians not to allow themselves to be lumped in with the Jews, but instead to submit to the Roman authorities. Don't see yourselves as victims under oppression. You are free in Christ and not beholden to any man or emperor. Act as free men and women, but don't use your liberty as an excuse to do whatever you want and rub other people's noses in it. Demonstrate your freedom by becoming servants and submitting to one another. Get along with the locals wherever God has planted you. Love those who call upon the name of Christ. And yes, pay your taxes and act as

respectable citizens and by doing so, honor the emperor whom God has allowed to rule over you.

18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. 19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

Peter doesn't stop at honoring the emperor. He continues by telling them to submit to their bosses and treat them with respect.

But here is where he expects us to be even more humble and obedient to God, by submitting ourselves to our bosses, even if they are mean to us. Anyone can obey and work for a good boss. That has its own reward.

But when you submit to someone who treats you badly, then you are following the example of Jesus. He was God, and yet He allowed both the Jewish and the Roman courts to unjustly convict Him and sentence Him to be humiliated, beaten and crucified. Through it all He never lashed out at them. In fact, the only thing He did was to ask the Father to forgive them because they didn't know what they were doing. He trusted God's judgment over that of man.

4. A People Redeemed

Finally, we come to the most misquoted verse in the Bible.

24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

In this passage, Peter is quoting the prophet Isaiah:

Isa 53:5

But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

While most people in the Word of Faith movement interpret this as to mean that our physical healing is automatic and was gained for us through His suffering while being scourged, whipped and beaten, this is talking about our spiritual healing.

We have all sinned, and because of that sin we have earned enmity with God. But, in His grace and mercy, He has made a way for us to enjoy a relationship with Him, through the sacrifice of Jesus.

This goes along with this passage:

Rom 3:23-25

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

As with anything else, we need to read the Scriptures in context and not isolate a verse to use as a proof for what we want it to mean.

This whole passage is talking about how through Jesus, we who didn't belong anywhere, have become a people, a tribe and are now His, through the forgiveness of our sins.

Conclusion

They see us as haters. They see us as hating women and hating anyone who chooses a different lifestyle than ours.

They actually see us as hypocrites because we don't use love as a justification for living outside established norms. How can it be wrong if people love? Aren't the teachings of Jesus all about love?

They revile us because we won't adapt our teaching to the new constructs of morality.

We indeed are aliens.

While we think that these things are new developments, they are not. They were as true in Peter's time as they are in ours.

God is calling us to be holy, to be set apart to be His witnesses in a fallen world.

He is calling us not attack and revile the world, for they know not what they're doing, but instead, to model His love and grace and to bring a message of hope to a world that desperately needs it.