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1 Peter 2:1 - 2:10



1 Peter - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg shares insights on 1 Peter 2:1 - 2:10, highlighting the importance of experiencing Jesus and cultivating a new life. He emphasizes the need to lay aside inconsistent behaviors and attitudes like malice, hypocrisy, envy, and lying, which hinder spiritual growth. He also discusses the concept of living stones and the royal priesthood, pointing out that believers are children of God and have both privileges and duties as priests. He concludes by acknowledging the sovereignty of God in predestination without denying human responsibility and free will.

Transcript

Returning to 1 Peter 2, we're at the beginning of the chapter. The chapter begins with therefore, just like chapter 1 verse 13 began with therefore, which means that Peter is taking sort of a cyclic approach to giving concepts and then their application. Whenever you find the word therefore, it means an application is now being made of what was said earlier.

And Peter really is, and I've made this comparison with Ephesians quite a few times because I think it's very affluent, Peter in his early chapters is really passing quickly over with brief mention, really, really deep theological thoughts, just as Paul did in Ephesians. It's like a one long sentence can be packed with half a dozen or more thoughts worthy of a seminary semester course on them, but we have to pass over them. We don't pass over them quite as quickly as he did, because we're actually taking some time to discuss some of them, as many as we can, but we need to be aware that we're really brushing the surface pretty much over some pretty deep things.

But the thing about these deep theological concepts is we probably could study them years and years and years and get deeper and deeper into our understanding of what they're about, but the main thing we need to know is what the therefore is. These things are true, and no doubt there's a lot more to know about them than we know. Perhaps there's a lot more to know about them than is discussed even anywhere in scripture, but we might never know all there is to know about these things.

But what we do know about them has ramifications. What we do know is that God redeemed us with the blood of Christ. What we do know is that God has planned this salvation forever to redeem us from our lawless deeds and from our aimless conduct.

What we do know is that we've been born again with the very nature of God, not with corruptible seed, but with the word of God. These things we know. How deep we could go into these things, nobody knows.

But this much that we do know has ramifications, and that's where the therefore comes in. These are the ramifications of that. Chapter 2, verse 1 says, Now, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, then lay aside certain things.

And desire something else. Assuming you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, have you really done that? You know, Peter can't assume that everyone in the church has really tasted of God. Because many people can repeat theology about God without ever having tasted Him.

The analogy has often been made in evangelizing people that you can know all about Jesus without having any experience of Jesus. Examples often made of some kind of food item, an apple let us say. You may know all about apples.

You may be able to describe one. You may be able to paint one, a perfect replica. You might be able to give us a scientific discourse on how apples differ from other fruits.

Or you might know all about how to grow them. But until you take a bite of an apple, you really don't know an apple. You know everything about it, but you haven't tasted it yet.

And I remember back in the 70's people witnessing like that. Until you taste and see, you don't know the Lord. You know all the theology it may be.

You might be able to repeat everything the Bible says on the subject. But until you have personally invested yourself in taking a sample and ingesting, then there is a dimension of knowing that you don't know yet. And that is compared with tasting.

In Psalm 34, and I think it's verse 7 if I'm not mistaken. It says, O taste and see that the Lord is good. And no doubt Peter has that verse in mind when he says, if you have tasted that the Lord is good.

We know that in Hebrews chapter 6 when the spiritual experience of persons who in the context are people who have now fallen away. Is being described where they were at before they fell away. It describes them in Hebrews 6, 4 as those who have tasted of the heavenly gift.

That would no doubt be salvation. And it says also in verse 5, they have tasted of the good word of God and of the powers of the age to come. The tasting speaks of of course

experiencing for yourself.

Not just knowing intellectually about something but you've actually participated in it. You've tasted it yourself. The same word is used by the writer of Hebrews in talking about Jesus.

In Hebrews 2, 9 it says he tasted death for every man. Now before Jesus came and died, God knew what death was academically. He'd seen people die.

He's the one who decreed death as the penalty for sin. But he hadn't tasted it yet until Jesus came to earth and actually died. He tasted death.

This is the first time God experienced death from the inside of the experience rather than just an external analysis of what it is when someone else does it. Tasting death is dying really. Tasting the heavenly gift, tasting the powers of the age to come.

This is what the writer of Hebrews describes as genuine Christian experience I believe. If you have a genuine Christian experience, if you're not just one of those people hanging out in the church and you know the songs, you've heard them all your life, you can repeat the doctrines because you've been in Sunday school but you've never tasted of God. Well then you're not the one I'm thinking of here.

I'm talking about those of you who have tasted God. If you've tasted that the Lord is good, then you need to cultivate this new life. Like when a baby is born healthy, its life needs to be maintained, nourished.

It needs to be cultivated. Like a plant needs to be cultivated. Once the seed springs up, it needs to be cared for and watered and so forth.

So a baby when it's born needs to be fed. You've got a new life. You've been born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible.

The metaphor of being born and the metaphor of a plant growing are both used in chapter 1 in the verses just prior to this. And so the idea is, okay, if you've been born again, desire milk like a baby does. If you've been, you know, if you're a seed that sprung up, then you need to cultivate this.

And what you need to do first of all is remove stuff. And then add stuff. Now, lots of people actually do not get excited about the Word of God.

Even though they profess to be Christians, maybe they even are Christians. I don't know. A baby that doesn't hunger for milk is not a healthy baby.

It needs nutrition. And if it doesn't know that, there's something not quite right about that baby. And a Christian, a real Christian who doesn't hunger for the Word of God, doesn't desire the Word of God like a newborn baby desires milk, there's something

wrong with that Christian.

It might be that they've neglected step number 1 in verse 1. You don't just enjoy the Word of God without first turning a corner in your life and giving up the way of life that is contrary to the Word of God. He says, first of all, you need to lay aside, what? A bunch of things that are simply inconsistent with living for God. You've been redeemed from your aimless way of life, so give up those things that are part of that aimless way of life.

And then you can properly benefit from the Word of God. If a person is reading and studying the Bible but they're still living in sin, I can't imagine that they're going to receive very much benefit from the Word of God. Ultimately, the Word of God might convict them and cause them to give up their sin.

But unless you're willing to give up the way of life that you're redeemed out of, you're not going to prosper and grow in the way of life that you've been born into. And so he says, lay aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking. This might be, in a sense, a random list of things that represent all the bad behaviors of the unsaved life.

I don't know that these specific vices are to be focused on more than, say, the whole world of vices that are out there. This may just be a sampling that stands for the whole category. But malice is certainly the opposite of love.

If you're malicious, a malicious person hates people and wishes them harm. A malicious person is almost certainly going to be a cruel person. A malicious person takes some delight in harm coming to people that are regarded to be his enemies.

And therefore cruelty is quite consistent with malice. You shouldn't have any of that in you. You should never feel that toward anyone, not your enemies, not anyone.

You should never have cruelty, even if you have to do something painful to somebody else, because it's your obligation in terms of even saving somebody else's life or maybe even saving their life. Spanking a child is not something a child likes, but you do it for their good. Sometimes you have to do things that are displeasing to another person or even hurtful to another person in some way.

But you should never do so with the mind that, I enjoy hurting this person. I want them to feel pain. I want their life to be miserable.

I want to destroy them. That's malice. And guile and hypocrisy are mentioned together.

I'm not sure even where the line is between guile and hypocrisy. Guile is really kind of having duplicity. You're sort of pretending to something that's not really true.

Guile would be lying, knowingly lying, misrepresenting something. Guilelessness is more like transparency, being seen for what you are. Remember when Jesus met Nathanael in

John chapter 1, he said, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.

Jesus was celebrating the fact that there were at least a few, like this man, who were true Israelites, not like the Pharisees who were full of guile. They always pretended to be something. He called them hypocrites, which the word itself means an actor, someone who wears a mask.

The Pharisees were pretending to be religious and righteous, but they really weren't. It was just a pretense. Nathanael, he was another kind of Israelite, a true Israelite.

None of that pretentiousness, none of that pretending to be more righteous than he was. No guile in him. When the 144,000 are mentioned in Revelation chapter 14, it says, In their mouth is no guile.

Which means, again, that they are true Israelites. Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile, like Nathanael. So we should be people who are pretty much, what you see is what you get.

Guileless, not pretending, not putting on some kind of phony heiness of being more righteous than we are. Hypocrisy is obviously very closely related to that. Envy.

Envy, well we all know what envy is. Everyone's known what it means to envy somebody. They have something that we wish we had.

Now, envying, I think, I mean, if you say, well I wish I had a better life than I have, like that person has. That's not necessarily sinful if you're not wishing to have it instead of them having it. It's like, I wish I had what he has instead of him having it.

That's what envy is, I think. If you say, I'd like to better my circumstances, that person is in better circumstances, that inspires me to want to do the same thing. That's not the same thing as sinful envy.

Envy is when you think, I should have that, not him. I want that for me, even at his expense if necessary. I'm putting my interests above his interests.

That's the opposite of love. And that's what envy is when it's sinful. All evil speaking.

Now this is a very vague expression, a very broad expression. All speaking that is evil. Some people I've known have felt that you should never criticize another person because that's speaking evil of them.

But obviously, the Apostle Paul and Jesus himself speaks evil of certain people. So what is evil speaking? Well, speaking, it's a general term for sins of the mouth. Lying, that's evil speaking.

Slander is evil speaking. Blasphemy, that's evil speaking. There's a lot of sins of the

mouth.

The book of Proverbs catalogues a lot of them. Boasting, lying, blaspheming, speaking, I don't know, all kinds of inappropriate speaking. Paul, in Ephesians, not surprisingly, has a section where he speaks equally vaguely about sins of the mouth.

However, he does give a positive that may help us to define what is the negative he's speaking against. In Ephesians chapter 5, in verse 3 and 4, Paul says, But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as is fitting for saints, neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather the giving of thanks. So clearly, coarse jesting, filthy talk, foolish talking, these are in the category of things that Christians shouldn't do.

Now, what actually constitutes that is not laid out, but we have to use some discernment apparently, whether our joking around gets a little too coarse, or whether our speech gets foolish. But in Ephesians 4, in verse 29, it says, Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. Well, corrupt communication would be like a synonym for evil speaking.

But, what is corrupt communication? Well, instead of telling us what corrupt communication is, he tells us what it is contrasted with. In Ephesians 4, in verse 29, he says, But rather, what should come out of your mouth is what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. Now, that's what good conversation is.

It's what is necessarily edifying. It ministers grace to people. Obviously, there's all kinds of talking that doesn't do that, and that would be evil communication.

If you're ministering condemnation, if you're ministering deception, if you're ministering anger to somebody, then that's evil speaking. If you're destroying someone's reputation by slander, whatever, that's evil speaking. You've got to put all that stuff away.

So, 1 Peter 2.1, once you've put all that stuff away, or you've basically renounced those things, then, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. You'll grow if you ingest and digest the word of God. Now, this digestion of the word of God is not necessarily automatic.

Just reading it or hearing it doesn't always have the impact that it could potentially have if it's properly received. Many people are raised in the church, children are raised in the church, and when they get older, none of it takes. It's just, you know, they haven't benefited at all from it.

They've heard it, but they haven't eaten it. And certainly, the correct way to grow from the word of God involves the addition of some things besides merely hearing. The parable of the sower talks about these different forms of soil, different kinds of soil, some

of which hear the word of God or the seed, receive it properly and produce fruit.

Some don't. Shallow reception on stony ground, a hard heart that doesn't receive it at all, a heart that receives it, but there's also the deceitfulness of riches, and the thorns and thistles come up, choke it up. Jesus said in one of the parallels to Matthew 13, when he's talking about the seed and the sower, he said the good seed, I think it's in Luke's version, it says in chapter 8, if I'm not mistaken, in Luke, verse 15.

The ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble heart, the King James is good in honest heart, but it says, I think, but here it says, a noble and good heart. Keep it and bear fruit with patience. That is, the word of God is received in the right kind of heart and produces the right kind of fruit as a result.

Actually, in James, there's a very similar statement. In James chapter 1, verse 21. James 1, verse 21 says, Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

So, again, the same thought as Peter. Put these things aside and receive the word of God instead. It seems to be necessary to have your heart prepared to receive the word.

Of the four soils that the seed fell on, only one really produced anything. There were three kinds of soil that were not going to produce anything. The same word, the same seed, was presented to all the people represented by those four kinds of soil.

But only one kind produced fruit. And therefore, the assumption here is that you don't just passively listen to the word of God and expect that to do something for you. You need to prepare the soil, prepare your heart to receive it.

That means if you have known sin, you repent of that known sin. You renounce known sin. I mean, you may get on a little while in the Christian life with some secret sin in your life, but you're not going to grow.

The word of God is not going to produce the fruit of your life while that's happening. You need to renounce those things, put them away from you, and then receive and desire the milk of the word. So that you may grow thereby.

Now, in verse 4, 1 Peter 2, 4, it says, Coming to him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is also contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on him will by no means be put to shame. Therefore to you who believe he is precious.

But to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. They stumble being

disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, who once were not a people, but are now the people of God, who have not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

I read this whole section, even though we're going to have to take it in smaller pieces to consider it, but this is because it's kind of a one flow of thought, and then he kind of introduces a new direction in the next verse. He starts out by talking about coming to Christ, which we do, and he uses the image of Christ as a living stone. Now he says we also are living stones, we are the same species.

By the way, stones, generally speaking, are not alive as we know, no one needs to tell us that. So a living stone would be a unique phenomenon, not natural. Stones are not naturally alive, and if you happen to discover a living stone, you've discovered something unique.

And Christ is said to be like a living stone. But more than that, we are said to be living stones in verse 5, which means that we share in that unique nature of Christ. Now, the stones, when he applies the imagery of being a stone to us, he's speaking of a stone building.

We're like stones built up into the wall of a building. We're built up into a spiritual house. When Christ is called a stone, this stone imagery has a wider variety of applications.

Yes, he's a cornerstone, so he's part of the building too. He's also the foundation stone, because he actually quotes, in verse 6 he quotes Isaiah 28, 16. And though he doesn't quote it quite in the same words as we have it in our book of Isaiah, he definitely makes Jesus out to be the cornerstone of the building.

In Isaiah 28, 16 it actually says, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a precious cornerstone. So he's a foundation stone. He's also a cornerstone.

He shifts often in these metaphors. But he's also a stumbling block. That's another thing that a stone may be.

And so, God in the Old Testament is often called Israel's rock. David and Moses both use that expression, calling God our rock. And usually a rock in the Old Testament was speaking of a fortress of sorts.

At least it was used in parallel with being a fortress. If you were being shot at by people with bows and arrows, to have a rock to hide behind is a good thing. To have a rock wall, better still.

A fortress built out of rock is good. To be up on a high plateau of rock was a pretty

secure place to be. You could hide behind the crags and, you know, it's not going to, if it rains while you're there, it's not going to wash away like sand.

A solid place to be, a solid fortress to build on a rock, Jesus said, is to build a house where you ought to build a house because the rock is not going to wash away when the flood's gone. Whereas building a house on sand, that's different. God is said to be the rock and the imagery of rock is multifaceted.

And we even see in this passage where Peter calls Jesus the living stone, he's got multifaceted conception here of what a rock is. When Jesus said we should build on a rock at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, he made it very clear, he's talking about himself or his teaching. He says, he that hears these words of mine and does them is like a man who builds his house on a rock.

He that hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a man who builds his house on sand. So building on a rock is building on Christ's authority, on his lordship, on basically the commitment to be obedient to him, that's building your house on a rock. Now here Jesus is a rock, but I don't know exactly why Peter wants to introduce the rock concept here, but that's not important for us to necessarily figure out.

We see he does introduce it, that Jesus is a rock, a stone, who is rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious. Now in saying that in verse 4, he is alluding to two different Old Testament passages. And the New Testament writers were fond of a number of Old Testament rock passages, which they applied to Jesus.

Two of them are alluded to in verse 4. When it says he's rejected indeed by men, he's referring to Psalm 118 verse 22, which he actually quotes here later in verse 7. He's quoting Psalm 118 verse 22, which says, The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. I'm not sure exactly how the psalmist meant that, but the New Testament writers believe that the Holy Spirit was saying that Jesus is the stone that was rejected by the builders. So again it's a construction metaphor.

A stone building is under construction. And the builders of the building have not found this stone suitable for their purposes, doesn't fit their blueprint, so they reject this stone. But lo and behold, God has made a whole new building around that one stone.

The builders didn't see the value in it, and so they rejected it. But God saw a value in it, and he said, Now that's going to be the cornerstone of my new building. Now who are the builders? Well clearly they're the ones who rejected Christ, and in particular the Jewish leaders.

Jesus was presented to Israel as the Messiah. But he wasn't the kind of Messiah they were looking for. They had their own blueprint for the kingdom of God, and he wasn't the kind of king they wanted.

They didn't want their idea of the kingdom built on the kind of king that he was presenting himself to be. It's like a stone that didn't fit their project. So they rejected him, killed him.

They were building their own project. And when God presented the Messiah, he just didn't fit into their project. So they rejected him, but then of course their project is rejected by God, because they rejected the cornerstone that God sent.

And so God builds a new house, a church, upon Christ, our foundation, and our cornerstone. And so this business of the stone rejected by men, verse 4, is referring to the fact that in Psalm 118, verse 22, it says that there would be a stone the builders would reject, but God would accept and use as the defining stone of the new project. But the other part of verse 4 says, But chosen by God, and precious.

This is a reference to Isaiah 28, 16, which he quotes in the next, actually in verse 6. It says, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect. That's, of course, chosen by God, verse 4, elect. And precious, that's also in verse 4. Of course in verse 7 he says, Therefore to you who believe he is precious.

This cornerstone, Christ, is a precious one, valued by us who believe. Those who didn't believe, he's a rejected cornerstone. What Isaiah 28, 16, and Psalm 118, verse 22, have in common, and those are the verses quoted in verse 6 and 7 of this passage, they have in common that Jesus is referred to as a cornerstone of a building.

And so Peter draws those two together as he's talking about the building of the new temple. Now we are also in the building, we are living stones, he says in verse 5. You also as living stones are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. Now there's a shift of metaphors there because a priesthood and a house are two different things.

The priests in the Old Testament served in the house of God, the temple. But he says we are both, we are the house and we are the temple. I mean the house and the priesthood, excuse me.

That is, the temple in the Old Testament and the priesthood that served in it, in their own way, each serve as metaphors of the church. Seen as a house, we are stones being built up into a house. Jesus is the chief cornerstone.

Seen as a priesthood, we are priests. Jesus is the chief priest. If you take the other metaphors for the church in the Bible, like the body, the body of Christ.

We are the body, he's the head. Or the family. God's the father, Jesus is the older brother, the firstborn.

And we're the children of God. These metaphors for the church always place Christ in the place of preeminence. But we are of the same nature.

We are children of God, but he's the firstborn of the family. We are stones, he's the cornerstone. But the point is we are like him, we're just not as important as he is.

He's the preeminent one. But except for the preeminence, he has made us very much of the same nature as himself. And he is thus building a temple, a spiritual house, a spiritual temple.

Now Peter, again, is getting this probably from Paul. He may be getting it just directly from God, but he's familiar with Paul. Peter elsewhere talks about Paul's letters and how much, how they agree with what he's saying.

And in Ephesians, once again, we have Paul making this very point. Paul doesn't use the term living stones. That's something Peter comes up with to describe the same thing Paul's talking about.

In Ephesians 2, verses 20 through 22, Paul is talking about how we have become members of the household of God. And he says in verse 20, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. So Paul has these passages in Psalm 118 and Isaiah 28 and 29 too.

Jesus is the chief cornerstone, just as Peter was saying. In whom, that is in Christ the whole building, he's talking about us, being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

So though Paul doesn't use the term living stones, he says Christians are being built together. The imagery is of stones being built up into a building. Peter sees us as stones.

Agreeable with Paul's metaphor. But they're both talking about a spiritual building. God lives in people now, not just individuals.

It's not like I'm the temple and you're the temple. It's that collectively the whole body of Christ is the temple. All Christians together.

And God is preparing the body of Christ to be ultimately the final and eternal dwelling place of God. But he dwells among us even now. Jesus said if two or more are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst.

In Hebrews 3.6 it said that Christ is the ruler over his own house. Whose house we are, it says. Paul said to the Corinthians, do you not know that you are the temple of God? And God dwells in you.

So this idea of earthly temples has taken a leave and been replaced by a spiritual temple. And that's what Peter's talking about. He's got Paul's ideas in here.

Of course they're God's ideas. I only mention Paul's ideas because I've been trying to point out how similar Peter is in this first epistle to, especially Ephesians, but also Paul's

writings elsewhere. Which Peter professes to have an admiration for.

He clearly does. Now, in addition to being a spiritual house, we're also a priesthood. And this is mentioned also later on in verse 9 where it says you are a chosen generation of royal priesthood.

The priesthood of the believer obviously is one of the New Testament doctrines that makes the new covenant different than the old covenant. In the old covenant there was a group of people within Israel who were priests. And they mediated between most Israelites and God.

But in the new Israel, in the new people of God, we don't have a group within the group who are mediators for the rest. All of us mediate. All of us have the same privileges the priests have and the same duties the priests have.

One of those duties is of course to mediate between God and the rest of the world. So our priestly function is to do for the world what the priesthood in Israel did for Israel. We are a kingdom comprised of priests.

A kingdom of priests it says in Revelation 5, 10. And so as priests we do the functions of priests toward the world around us. What are the functions of priests? Well, they offer sacrifices.

And we offer our bodies a living sacrifice. Romans 12, 1. We offer the sacrifice of praise to God. Hebrews 13, 15.

But we also teach the word. Because that's what the priests did too. The priests taught the rest of Israel the word of God, the law of God.

And Jesus told us to go out and disciple the nations and teach them to observe all things he commanded. So there's this priestly function that the church has toward the rest of the world. That Israel's priesthood once had toward them.

And that's a separate theological discussion. Which Peter passes over with a single phrase. That we are a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Those spiritual sacrifices are, as I said, offering our bodies. Even offering the fruit of our lips and even our good works. He says in Hebrews, I guess it's 13, 16 I think it is.

He says, but to do good and to share. Do not be neglectful with such sacrifices. God is well pleased.

And so we offer up sacrifices to God as a priesthood. And we also, of course, represent God to the world by teaching them to observe what Christ has commanded. That's, of course, evangelism and discipleship.

Now we've already mentioned verses 6 and 7 where he simply brings up these two quotes that he has alluded to in verse 4. He made a statement in verse 4 and he justifies it by quoting these two passages in verses 6 and 7. What I might point out to you just in passing is he says in verse 7, Therefore to you who believe he is precious, but to those who are disobedient. Can you notice the contrast? Those who believe versus those who are disobedient. Once again, he's just assuming this is the normal contrast.

He could say, to you who believe he is precious, to those who don't believe he's a stone of stumbling. But don't believe and disobedient are the same thing. It's the obvious contrast in his mind.

He said, to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. And in verse 8 he quotes from another passage. This other passage is actually from Isaiah also, but another place in Isaiah.

Isaiah 8.14 where it says, he's a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. So a stone can be used in a building. A stone can be used for lots of things.

It can even be used as ammunition if you have a slingshot. Or to kill giants. But the truth is that Jesus as a stone is seen as having a central role in what God is doing on the earth, what he's building.

But also to those who reject him, it's just not neutral. It's not just that they miss out, but they stumble over him. They are offended by him.

And he says in verse 8, they stumble being disobedient to the word. To which they also were appointed. Now this line, to which they also were appointed, is a Calvinist proof text.

That those people who reject Christ do so because they were thus appointed by God to reject him. To stumble at the word. And so the Calvinist says, you see, God has foreordained that some people will be believers.

And that some people will not be believers. And will be lost. Now one thing that's interesting, if you talk to Calvinists today, most of them are not quite so robust in their Calvinism as Calvin himself was.

Calvin didn't mind saying that God foreordained some to go to heaven and some he foreordained to go to hell. Modern Calvinists don't like to say that second part. They just say, well God didn't predestine anyone to go to hell.

It's just that everyone was by default going to hell. He only predestined to save some. But you see, by their doctrine, God predestined as many as he wanted to.

According to predestination in Calvinism, God wasn't limited in how many he could

predestine. Because he's not holding out for any conditions on their part. It's unconditional.

Election. Which means that God could, if he wanted to predestine only one person to be saved. Or 50%.

Or 90%. Or even 100%. God could predestine as many as he wants to predestine.

Under the Calvinist system, he only predestined some to be saved. But God found the world on the road to hell and he predestined to rescue a few. And not the others, when he could have.

Which means he did predestine them not to be saved, if that doctrine is true. Now that's an unpleasant statement and therefore almost all Calvinists you read now, or talk to, will say, no, God didn't predestine anyone to be lost. But by only predestining some to be saved, it would be the same thing as predestining the rest not to be saved, but to be lost.

And yet, if this verse we're looking at actually supports Calvinism at all, it supports the more robust kind of Calvinism. Because if it is saying that God foreordained that the unbelievers would be unbelievers and lost, would stumble at the word, then that is definitely teaching the doctrine that Calvin taught, but which most Calvinists are afraid to affirm today. This is not a statement, if it's applicable at all to the Calvinist argument, it is not a statement about who God saved, who he predestined to be saved, but who he predestined not to be saved.

They stumble because, what? They were appointed to that. Now if this is saying that God, before they were born, appointed them to stumble, then that's predestination to be lost, isn't it? Predestination to damnation. Now, we have to realize that unless the Bible teaches such a thing generally, we need to be careful about trying to see one passage teaching it alone.

That would be a big matter. If it is true that the masses of humanity that God made in his own image, God made them simply to ordain them to burn in hell, that's like a major thought. I mean, you'd think a lot of Bible verses would come to the rescue of that counterintuitive suggestion.

This is one of the very, very few that they would ever use to make this point. But does it make that point? Is it saying that? Is Peter saying that people who are unbelievers are unbelievers because they were foreordained before the foundation of the world to be unbelievers? Well, obviously if the Bible teaches this elsewhere, then this verse could be a supportive text of that. I don't see it as a necessary view, though.

To say that they were appointed to stumble at the Word does not necessarily mean that they were appointed before they were born to stumble at the Word. If God appointed

certain people to stumble at the Word, it may be because they had already turned against him earlier in their life. And this is the judgment that he is bringing upon them.

Like when he hardened Pharaoh's heart. Certainly God appointed that Pharaoh would harden his heart and would not let the people go through the first nine plagues. But that doesn't mean he foreordained Pharaoh before he was born.

God did that when Pharaoh was an adult. Pharaoh had already a career of being an evil man, worthy of God's judgment. At the end of Pharaoh's life, after being a very wicked man by choice, God says, okay, I'm going to punish you by appointing you to be rebellious for the rest of your life, no matter how much it hurts you.

And it's going to hurt you bad because you have nine, ten plagues come on you because of this. And I'm appointing you to suffer in this way by your rebellion. I'm hardening your heart so that you won't repent.

Now we might say, well, why would God do that? I don't know why God would do that always. I mean, I don't know why he doesn't do it all the time and does it some of the time. But the point here is that his hardening of Pharaoh so that he wouldn't repent was not a unilateral thing God did to Pharaoh before he was born.

And predestined him. It's rather God found Pharaoh a wicked man, worthy of judgment. And this is the judgment he made.

I'm going to appoint for you to suffer and have your end come in this way. That's your judgment for the choices you've made freely. I didn't predestine that you would make those choices.

But now that you've made them, I'm predestining this punishment for you. I'm appointing this to you. It doesn't say these people were predestined to stumble.

It says they were appointed to stumble. At what point was that appointment made? Well, we don't know. But certainly it is well within the realm of possibility that God appointed them to stumble because of their prior choices to disobey.

We know that Jesus indicated, and Paul indicated, both that the Jews of Jesus' day to a large extent rejected Jesus because God blinded their eyes. I mean, they were appointed not to believe. But why? Why did he do that? Well, Jesus said it was because they were already rejecting the law of Moses.

He said, if you won't listen to Moses, you can't believe me. That is to say, they had a time when they could have responded favorably to God. He was appealing to them, and they were rejecting him.

So, he says, okay, your judgment is not going to blind you. So that, you know, if you're

rejecting what I've revealed to you before, I'm not going to let you see what I have coming now. Those who actually were God's faithful remnant in Israel, before Jesus even came along, were the ones who God brought to him.

Remember in Acts, I guess it's chapter 16, I suppose, when Paul came to Philippi, and Lydia was there? It says, she was a worshiper of God from Thithyre, and God opened her heart to behead the things that Paul said. Calvin is pointing out, well, look, God opened her heart. Who makes people believe or not according to his predestination? Well, there's no reference to predestination there, but there is reference to the fact that before God opened her heart, she was a worshiper of God.

People who worshipped God before they heard about Christ were set up to benefit from Christ, and to believe in him. God blessed them with the revelation of Christ, because they were already inclined toward him. Those who were already rejecting him, he said, well, you know, you don't deserve the truth.

Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2, that because people do not receive the love of the truth, he says, therefore God will send them strong delusion, so that they'll believe the lie. Now, it's not because he predestined them before they were born, to believe a lie. It's because they did not receive the love of the truth when they had the opportunity.

Therefore, God sends them strong delusion. So, if Peter is saying, there are people who have stumbled, because God has appointed them to stumble, we don't have to assume he means way back before they were born, God appointed them to stumble. It just means that this is God's judgment upon them.

We should assume that if God sent judgment on them, they had done something worthy of judgment. And this they would have had to do back when they had, you know, freedom of choice about the matter. There's many people who've turned against God, so decisively, before they hear the gospel, that he doesn't honor them with a revelation of who Christ is when they do hear the gospel.

There are consequences for hardening your heart against God. And these people who stumble, he is no doubt speaking about the Jews who rejected Christ. I say that because they are the builders that rejected the stone.

The stone which those builders rejected, well, they've stumbled over him. Why? They were the ones, the Jewish leaders, who had turned against God earlier, and did not obey Moses' law. Didn't receive the revelation that God had previously given.

So God appointed that they would also stumble when they heard the gospel. They did. Now, even that may bother us, but whether it does or not, it certainly is a different issue than God predestining from the foundation of the world that a certain percentage of the people are just going to go to hell and they're not going to have another choice about it.

Now, there's another possibility, even, of understanding this verse. It's only slightly different. And that is that what they were appointed to is to stumble because they were disobedient.

It says, they stumble being disobedient to the word, to which they were appointed. It doesn't mean that their disobedience was appointed, but they're stumbling because of their obedience. It says they were disobedient to the word, and therefore God appointed that they'd stumble.

I mean, the wording can go that way. So I'm not arguing that we have a slam dunk Arminian interpretation that just throws the Calvinist one out of the ring, but I'm saying that the verse can go either way. If you have Calvinism established elsewhere in scripture, you could kind of bring kind of a Calvinist interpretation to this verse, but it's not at all necessary.

It doesn't say the specific things Calvinists are affirming from it. Now, in contrast to those who stumble, there's us in verses 9 and 10. But you are a chosen generation.

The word generation here probably should be understood to mean a family, a race. The word generation can mean that. And he says you're a chosen generation.

I think a lot of new translators should say a chosen race here. Royal priesthood. He's already mentioned that.

Priesthood. However, it's royal. Priests of the kingdom.

Royal has to do with kingship. It's not saying necessarily that we are kings, but we are priests in the kingdom. It's a royal role that we play under the king.

We're a holy nation. We don't think of the church as a nation so much, because we think of a nation as a political unit with certain boundaries and so forth, like the nation of America or Canada or Mexico or Israel or whatever. There's nations with boundaries that are politically defined.

The kingdom of God is actually sort of like that. The church is like that. We have a king, but we don't have territory, limited territory.

We are actually a nation within the nations. We dwell in other nations. A little bit like the gypsies perhaps, or like the Israelites when they were in the diaspora.

They're a nation. They're a separate people under a separate government in a sense. I mean, they follow the law of Moses if they do, but they live in Germany or Russia or America or Poland or somewhere like that.

They are a nation dispersed. And so are we. We are one nation under one king, but we're dispersed among the nations.

And we are that nation that Jesus referred to. In Matthew chapter 21, at the end of the parable of the vineyard and the tenants of the vineyard, in Matthew chapter 21 and verse 44, or no, 43, Jesus said, therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. Israel was the nation that first received the kingdom at Mount Sinai.

God said that to them in Exodus 19, 5 and 6. He said they would be his kingdom if they were obedient. But now Jesus said it's taken from you and given to another nation. This is not a political nation.

He didn't take the kingdom from Israel and give it to the British or to the Americans or to the Arabs. He took it and gave it to a spiritual people, a spiritual nation. And Peter says you are that holy nation.

You are his own special people. These are all terms that applied to Israel in the Old Testament. But now Peter is writing to Christians and saying, Israel was the chosen race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, God's special people.

Lots of verses in the Old Testament use those kinds of words and speak about Israel. He says now you Christians, you hold those titles because you belong to God in Christ. You have these positions.

Now I would point out that the word generation, priesthood, nation, and people are collective terms. He is saying that the chosenness is a collective thing. The nation is chosen or holy.

The race of Christians is chosen. These are collective terms. God has collectively chosen the church.

And I say that, some of you know what I am getting at, some may not, but this is a different concept than to think of individual chosenness. God chose the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, but individuals could be in it or out of it as they chose. The chosenness was of the corporate nation, Israel.

God chose Israel to be the nation that he was going to bring the Messiah through. If a Gentile wanted to be in Israel, he could. He could become a proselyte, become part of Israel.

In the law, it was said that if he did that, he could be like one of the natives of the land. He could be an Israelite. If a Jew wanted to not be a believer in Yahweh, he could leave.

And he would be cut off from Israel. Israel's constituency, the actual persons who made up the nation, could be flexible. Persons could come in and persons could go out, but the nation itself was chosen.

If you came in, you were one of the chosen people. If you left, you were no longer one of the chosen people. So also Christ, who is the new Israel, if you're in Christ, you're chosen in him.

If you depart from Christ, you're not in the chosen. The chosenness is of the category, those who are in Christ. The nation, the priesthood, the people, the generation, these are corporate categories.

And therefore, this chosenness that Peter speaks about is a chosenness of the categories, not necessarily the individual membership. There's some choices we have, too, about our involvement or lack thereof. Now it says of us, at the end of verse 9, he called us out of darkness into light.

That's a fairly generic and oft-repeated fact in many passages of the Bible. But this next statement is not generic. It says, who were once not a people, but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Now, this is a really important verse to consider because he's quoting from Hosea, or at least alluding strongly from Hosea. Hosea had two sons that he disowned because it would appear they were illegitimate. Hosea's wife was a chief.

She was a wife of fornication, of harlotry. And his first child seems to have been his own legitimate child. But they had two other children.

And God said, name this one, not my people. And name this one, no mercy. And God, if you look at Hosea chapter 1, we see this story.

Hosea's right after Daniel, which makes it one of the easier minor prophets to find. Minor prophets are the hardest books in the Bible to find for someone who doesn't have them all memorized. But Daniel's easy to find.

And then Hosea's the next book after that. But in Hosea chapter 1, Hosea has his first child by his wife, Gomer. In Hosea 1-4, his child's name is Jadreel.

But then there's two more children born. In verse 6, it says, And she conceived again and bore a daughter. God said to him, Call her name Loruhamma, for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel.

Loruhamma, the girl's name, means no mercy. And then, in verse 8 and 9, Now when she had weaned Loruhamma, she conceived and bore a son. And God said, Call his name Lo-Ami, which means not my people or no kin of mine, for you are not my people, and I will not be your God.

Now, what's interesting here is that, when your wife has a child and you name him none of mine, no kin of mine, it strongly suggests it's an illegitimate child. And there was

reason to suspect that. It's interesting, when Hosea's first child was born, the suggestion is that it is Hosea's child.

It says in verse 3, So he went and took Gomer, and she conceived. It sounds like he went into her and he's the father, the first child. But the other two children, it just says she conceived again.

It doesn't say that he has slept with her, that she got pregnant again, by whom no commitment is made by the text. But in verse 10, It says, Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass, in the place where it was said to them, You are not my people, that's the name Lo-Ami, there it shall be said to them, You are the sons of the living God.

And so, where God said to them, You are not my people, or to some people, You are not my people, he will call them the sons of the living God. But look at chapter 2, verse 23 of Hosea. Hosea 2, verse 23, Then I will sow her for myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy.

And I will say to those who were not my people, You are my people. And they shall say, You are my God. Now this is what, of course, Peter is referring to here.

He says, You had not obtained mercy, but you now have obtained mercy. You were not a people, but you are now the people of God. Peter is speaking to the church as if they are the fulfillment of this promise in Hosea.

Now, if you read Hosea chapters 1 and 2, without the New Testament commentary from Peter, you get the impression that God is simply saying, the Jews, who in Hosea's day were rebellious it wasn't actually the Jews, it was Israel, the northern kingdom, that Israel, who was rebellious, and God says, You are not my people, I'm not going to show mercy on you anymore, that that's going to turn around for them. That they will someday be his people again. That they will someday have mercy again.

That's what you would get the impression just reading Hosea chapters 1 and 2. We haven't read it all, but you can trust me about that, or you can read it yourself, and you'll find that it sounds like what he's saying, these same Israelites that he's rejected, are later going to be restored. But, Peter says, no, it's actually a different group that are going to be the people of God. Those who had not previously been a people at all, and those who had not obtained mercy, he means Gentiles and others who had not been part of God's people, will be.

And Paul uses these verses the same way as Peter does. In Romans chapter 9, in Romans 9, verse 23, Paul says, And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom he called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. So Paul specifically says the vessels

of mercy are Jews and Gentiles, that is Christians who are believers.

And he says in verse 25, as he also says in Hosea. He's going to quote these verses in Hosea, and he's doing it to prove that God's vessels of mercy are Jews and Gentiles. He says, And it shall come to pass, in the place where it was said to them, you are not my people, there they will be called the sons of the living God.

This is the passage we read in Hosea. And Paul is using it to establish the fact that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, will be God's people. They will be God's vessels of mercy.

So both Paul and Peter read these verses in Hosea, which we, if we didn't have Paul and Peter talking about them, we would read them and say, well, it looks like God's going to restore the nation of Israel and make them his people again. Paul says, no, that's talking about Jews and Gentiles. Peter says, that's talking about you, Christians.

So just as many of the Old Testament passages were understood differently in the New Testament by the writers, because Jesus opened their understanding so that they might understand the scriptures. So this is one of those cases, a passage in Hosea, we would never have, without Paul or Peter quoting them in this connection, we would never have thought of ourselves as being in those passages. But both Paul and Peter say that we Gentiles who are in Christ are included in those predictions about people who were not previously God's people, who had not previously obtained mercy, now we have.

That's the definition Peter says. It's the case that we are the new Israel, in other words. And that's why he refers to us as the diaspora in verse 1, which is a term that usually applies to Israel, but in this case applies to us as strangers and soldiers in the world.

The people of God who formerly, as Gentiles, did not have that status. We do now. Well, that brings us to the end of chapter 2, verse 10.

Another good place to break.