

**1 Peter 2:1-8**; Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Michael Gunn on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009

*“The free-lance Christian, who would be a Christian but is too superior to belong to the visible Church upon earth in one of its forms, is simply a contradiction in terms.”*

**C.E.B. Cranfield**

## Intro

If it is true that we have been born again by the act of Jesus on the cross, and we are “transformed” by His actions, then Peter begins a reasoned treatise on the nature of the church and spiritual realities ought to be recognized in tangible, gospel ways. Simply; the truth of the gospel affects our actions. Orthodoxy (Right thinking) without orthopraxy (Right actions) is a possible sign that the truth of the gospel is not dominating our lives. Our actions are in no way a way to gain acceptance from God, but they are a result of God’s work in our hearts and minds (See **James 1:21-23; 2:17, 24**).

## From the Head...

### The Command (1 Peter 2:1-2)

Actually this isn’t a command as much as it is a truth. If we are truly going to be a “Holy Nation” we need to stop being “hypocrites” and “slanderers,” etc. It is hard to be heralds of the gospel if we are people that live double lives. Our witness is ultimately based on our lives (Demonstration) as it is the speaking of the truth (Declaration). None of this is possible if we aren’t nourished on the word itself. The word translated “Spiritual” (ESV) is the Greek word “Logikon,” and has the idea of word/or reason (We get Logic from it), which is why the NASB translates it the “*Pure milk of the word.*” The word has the idea of reason, and is only found here and in **Romans 12:1** (Rendered “Reasonable”). This word doesn’t have a western idea of logic/reason attached to it, but it does suggest that there is a reasoned aspect to our spiritual growth (See **Matthew 22:37**, “Love God with your mind...”). God has given us a substantive “Word” to meditate on. If we are going to grow in our faith, our thinking is going to have to be re-shaped by God’s word (**1 Peter 1:13; Romans 12:2**). We are born of the word (**1 Peter 1:23**) and we grow by the word (**v. 2**).

### The Motivation (1 Peter 2:3)

Though this is just one verse, it can’t be overlooked. Our heart motivation is more important than our action. Doing works for God thinking that we are somehow justified by them stems from a misunderstanding of the gospel, and is subsequently the foundation of our sinful heart. Doing religious works do not save you, but they ought to be the result of a heart that is being transformed by God’s love, and is operating out of desire to joyously demonstrate that love, and not justify our existence in any way. We are already fully accepted in Christ, so now we can act out the law in gratitude not fear/pride. Our motivation is God’s kindness. “*if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord...*” If you have, then you too can act kindly. If you have tasted the forgiveness of the Lord, then you too can forgive. If you too have tasted the grace of the Lord, then you too can act graciously. To the extent that we don’t is the extent that we don’t believe the truth of the gospel in our own lives. The New Testament’s motivation is always through an understanding of what God has first done for us (See **2 Corinthians 8:9**). If we can’t see ourselves as accepted by God in Christ, we will always be aiming at finding our acceptance in works or some other idol.

### The Desired Result (1 Peter 2:4-8)

The result is the church itself. Our passage gives us insight into the nature and function of the church:

#### 1. **The Church as a Community**

Peter mixes his metaphors here. The church is called “Living Stones” and a “Spiritual House.” This gives us a picture of the church as individuals that form a community for the sake of the gospel. The bible doesn’t know anything about believers on their own, but God (Writing through Peter) is redefining the synagogue in Christ Jesus as the “Chief corner stone” (**Ephesians 2:20**). The church is not a place but a gathering of His people for a common goal to “*Offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*” We are called “Living Stones” like He is since the church is made “Like” Him through His work on the cross; and like Him, we are called out to do the work of the kingdom in the world. Peter uses 3 verses from the OT (**Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14**) to emphasize that we are a community in Christ. All of these verses are originally speaking of either Israel who would be rejected by man, but accepted by God, or the Messiah who, like Israel, would also be rejected when He came; yet it is clear that the NT writers (Writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit) saw these verses as referring to Jesus, and in our context the body of Christ; His church. The emphasis here to these churches who are facing persecution is that they are like Jesus as “Living Stones” who will be rejected by the world who doesn’t know Christ, but fully accepted by God in Christ. As the community of faith, the world will always reject us, because it rejects Jesus (See **v.8**).

## 2. The Church as a Bridge-Builder

The church is not just a place to go to, or an institution to be a part of. As a matter of fact, it was never intended to be an institution that puts on a religious show, and parcels out religious goods and services. The Church (All of us) are a "Living Stone" that is given a task to accomplish. Verse 5 reminds us that we are being built up "*For a holy priesthood*" (See **1 Peter 2:9**).

All believers are ministers of the gospel and responsible to act as priests to the unbelieving world. The Latin term for priest (*Pontifex*) means "Bridge-Builder." We are like that as a community of faith. The church exists to create bridges to the culture. Unfortunately it appears that we are often more known for burning those bridges than forming them.

Priests mediated between men and God, and the priests offered up sacrifices for the sins of the people. This is similar to Paul's idea that we are to "*Present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship*" (**Romans 12:1**). The church (The people, not the place) is to live their lives under the banner of worship. Worship is an attitude of the heart, not an event. When we serve God with joy and love, we are participating in worship. As John Piper writes, "*God is most glorified in us, when we are most satisfied in Him.*" This is why we were created by God (**Isaiah 43:7**; see too **Exodus 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3**; note the word "Serve" has the idea of "Worship"). God has always called a people to Himself so that they would honor and glorify Him. This is His purpose in creation and re-creation (See **Ephesians 1:6, 12; 14**). His demand for His own praise though is also His demand for our greatest joy. We are simply created to find our joy in Him, and our joy is heightened by the praise we give. Sin is a creation of idols that seeks to locate our joy and acceptance through our own works found in either religion and/or irreligion.

So as we honor God and serve Him by serving humanity, we act as bridge-builders of the gospel to a world that doesn't know Him.. We are as Leslie Newbigin has written the "*Hermeneutic of the gospel.*" We are able to interpret the gospel to a world that can't hear it.

## 3. The Church as a Herald (Witness)

Though we will dissect verse nine more next week, I would like to highlight one truth in regards to the church, and that is the church is a group of "Heralds" proclaiming "*The excellencies of Him*" This is the duty of the church plural, not one person preaching the word. This isn't preaching here, this is heralding the good news of the gospel. If we truly a "Chosen Race," "Royal Priesthood," a "Holy Nation," etc. then we are called to be proclaimers (Heralds) of God's excellence, and that excellence is found in the idea that He has rescued us from darkness!

### ...to the Heart

My desire is that you won't try harder, but you will fall in love with Jesus. We are all flawed, and we are all in process, and the gospel should help us understand that, because we should never see ourselves as better or more "Sold Out" than anyone else, however, if the "Imperishable" seed of the gospel is a reality in our lives, we should begin to have a heart for His word, and a desire to please the one that saved us. Our works are never an avenue to being right with God, but they are a result of the grace that God has shown us (See **Ephesians 2:8-10**). If we can't treat one another with love, we must Bemis-understanding the love of God on our own lives. If we can't forgive someone else, we must not understand the forgiveness we have in Christ. As you are nourished by the word, let it reveal who you are, and create a daily repentance and faith routine. Not a religious repentance that acts as though repentance makes you right, but a daily agreement that God is right, and you can appropriate His forgiveness in your life, because He is "faithful and just to forgive you (See **1 John 1:9**).

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