

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

**COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION**  
ON  
**PETER AND THE FIRST EPISTLE** THAT BEARS HIS NAME

**CONVERSATION STUDY PLAN #6 for Thursday – December 4, 2014**

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**GENERAL INTRODUCTIONS:** - *brief - who are we who have gathered in Ogram Hall?*

**OPENING PASTORAL PRAYER**

**THE MUTUAL SHARING OF PEACE BY GOD'S PEOPLE**

**A LOOK AT OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SESSION:**

- To quickly review past sessions and make mental note of the continuity in Peter's thought as we move forward to consider today's subject matter;
- To consider the meaning of "*Christ as our Chief Cornerstone*";
- To more fully grasp the church's teaching about the "*Priesthood of all believers*;"
- To begin exploring the "*Imperatives*" of the Christian faith; especially *respect for governmental* authorities

**A REVIEW OF PAST TEXTS TO ORIENT US FOR TODAY'S STUDY:**

**A) The Indicatives of the Christian Faith**

**1. *Believers have a precious Salvation* (1:3-12)**

- i) giving them hope (1:3-5)
- ii) giving them joy (1:6-9)
- iii) witnessed by OT prophets (1:10-11)
- iv) really, the desire of angels! (1:12)

**2. *Believers have been given a new way of life* (1:13-25)**

- i) a way of life that requires the holiness of "*obedient children*" (1:13-16)
- ii) a way of life that requires reverence to the heavenly Father (1:17-21)
- iii) a way of life requiring genuine love toward genuine brothers (1:22-25)

**3. *Believers are a chosen Priesthood* (2:1-10)**

- i) who crave the "*Milk of the Word*" (2:1-3)

===== now: we proceed to this new textual material =====

## ii) who come to Christ in worship & offer spiritual sacrifices (2:4-5)

{AMP TRANSLATION} vs.4 **Come to Him** [THEN, TO THAT] **Living Stone** which men tried and threw away, but which is chosen [AND] **precious in God's sight.** <sup>5</sup> [COME] and, like living stones, be yourselves built [INTO] a **spiritual house, for a holy** (DEDICATED, CONSECRATED) **priesthood, to offer up** [THOSE] **spiritual sacrifices** [THAT ARE] **acceptable and pleasing to God through Jesus Christ.**

### HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE INFORM OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH?

- A) During his earthly ministry, Jesus referred to **PSALM 118:22-23**, when he spoke of being rejected by his own people. (See – **MATTHEW 21:42; MARK 12:10-11; LUKE 20:17**)
- B) Although he was rejected, Jesus is now the “*cornerstone*,” the most important part of the church; in addition to this reference in 1 Peter, see also: **ACTS 4:11 & EPHESIANS 2:20**

### FOR FURTHER CONVERSATION:

1. Who is the “living stone” described in vs. 4; how does a human’s view of that Living Stone differ from God’s view?
2. Who are the living stones of vs. 5; what is the house that they make up?

## iii) a spiritual house based on precious stone previously rejected (2:6-8)

{AMP TRANSLATION} vs.6 **For thus it stands in Scripture: Behold, I am laying in Zion a chosen** (HONORED), **precious chief Cornerstone, and he who believes in Him** [WHO ADHERES TO, TRUSTS IN, AND RELIES ON HIM] **shall never be disappointed or put to shame.** <sup>7</sup> **To you then who believe** (WHO ADHERE TO, TRUST IN, AND RELY ON HIM) **is the preciousness; but for those who disbelieve** [IT IS TRUE], **The** [VERY] **Stone which the builders rejected has become the main Cornerstone,** <sup>8</sup> **And, A Stone that will cause stumbling and a Rock that will give** [MEN] **offense; they stumble because they disobey and disbelieve** [GOD'S] **Word, as those** [WHO REJECT HIM] **were destined** (APPOINTED) **to do.**

### HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE INFORM OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH?

- A) Explore further the ancient prophecies found in **ISAIAH 8:14-15** and **28:16-17**
- B) Remember the importance of a “*LITHOS*” (Greek word for “cornerstone”) in antiquity!
- C) Peter’s readers would have understood the cornerstone to be Israel;
- D) ...now Peter applies the image to Christ;
- E) Peter shows that the church does not cancel the Jewish heritage, but fulfills it!

### FOR FURTHER CONVERSATION:

1. Are you able to speak about the context of Isaiah's original words?
2. In what sense is Jesus like a "corner stone?"
3. Where else does the concept of "Jesus as *cornerstone*" appear in the N. T.?
4. Who were the builders that rejected Jesus; how did He still become cornerstone?
5. What does this illustrate about God's power?
6. How many Christian hymns can you identify that make use of this imagery?
7. In what sense is this cornerstone also a stumbling block?
8. Is it always wrong to be a stumbling block?

#### iv) they are God's own possession (2:9)

{AMP TRANSLATION} 9 **But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, [GOD'S] own purchased, special people, that you may set forth the wonderful deeds and display the virtues and perfections of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.**

### HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE INFORM OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH:

- A) The readers of this letter are being described in the language that the O. T. used for Israel. They were a chosen people. See **ISAIAH 43:20-21**.
- B) The phrases: "royal priesthood" and "holy nation" are taken from **EXODUS 19:5**.
- C) Christians speak of "the priesthood of all believers." In O. T. times, God was unapproachable by ordinary sinful women/men.
- D) A priest acted as an intermediary between God and humans.
- E) Christ's victory on the Cross has now made it possible to come directly into God's presence without fear (see esp. **Hebrews 4:16**)
- F) With this new identity, we are given responsibility of bringing others (see *Paul's teaching in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21*)

### QUESTIONS FOR MORE CONVERSATION:

1. Whom, in your estimation, is today's "chosen generation?"
2. How is that "choice" made?

## v) to the praise of God's Glory (2:10)

{AMP TRANSLATION}:<sup>10</sup> **Once you were not a people [AT ALL], but now you are God's people; once you were unpitied, but now you are pitied and have received mercy.**

### HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE INFORM OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH?

- A) Peter, here, turns to the O. T. prophecy of **Hosea**. That book is a love story – real, tragic and true. Transcending the tale of a young Hosea and his wife, Gomer, it tells of God's love for his people and the response of his "bride."
- B) The specific reference here is to **HOSEA 2:23**
- C) The original pronouncement provided encouragement to Israel that God would redeem them from the punishment they had brought on themselves.
- D) In final analysis, the church is a community of grace!
- E) People often base their own self-image, or the perception that they have of others, on personal accomplishments, success, wealth, jobs, degrees earned or conferred...
- F) ...but, Value comes from being one of God's children; not from personal achievements.
- G) Worth is the measure of God's (*grace*) doing; not our doing!

### QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE FURTHER CONVERSATION:

1. Have there been times when we were "not a people?"
2. Are there particular groups of people whom you see in that category today?

## C) The Imperatives of Living the Christian Faith in the World (1 Peter 2:11-17)

### 1. A turn in focus from looking inward and turning to the world outside (vss.11-12)

{AMP TRANSLATION}:<sup>11</sup> **Beloved, I implore you as aliens and strangers and exiles [IN THIS WORLD] to abstain from the sensual urges** (THE EVIL DESIRES, THE PASSIONS OF THE FLESH, YOUR LOWER NATURE) **that wage war against the soul.** <sup>12</sup> **Conduct yourselves properly** (HONORABLY, RIGHTEOUSLY) **among the Gentiles, so that, although they may slander you as evildoers, [YET] they may by witnessing your good deeds [COME TO] glorify God in the day of inspection** [WHEN GOD SHALL LOOK UPON YOU WANDERERS AS A PASTOR OR SHEPHERD LOOKS OVER HIS FLOCK

- [another Scripture version is worthy of our consideration](#) -

{THE MESSAGE TRANSLATION} Friends, this world is not your home, so don't make yourselves cozy in it. Don't indulge your ego at the expense of your soul. Live an exemplary life among the natives so that your actions will refute their prejudices. Then they'll be won over to God's side and be there to join in the celebration when he arrives.

## HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE FURTHER INFORM OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH?

- A) Because Peter was aware of the sensitive nature of this material, he addresses his audience as “*Beloved*” or “*dear friends!*”
- B) He begins by reminding them that they are “*aliens and strangers*” (as in 1 Peter 1:1)
- C) Understand these as transitional verses providing an introduction to Christian behavior in a sinful world; instead of a command, Peter ‘*urges*’ or ‘*entreats*’ them.
- D) Notice the definite movement toward addressing real life problems.
- E) Fleshly or sensual desires include far more than just physical temptations (for further clarification turn to Paul’s teaching in **GALATIANS 5:19-21**)
- F) Proper Christian behavior cannot occur when we forget that we are aliens and exiles in this world; we are a people who have been won over to an entirely different view of life by the action of Christ.
- G) Peter’s reminder is that this a true “life & death” struggle.
- H) Vs. 12 reveals one of Peter’s basic strategies. In face of pressure and persecution, he calls for a life of goodness that is so transparent that the accusers of the world cannot help but take notice!
- I) Finally, Peter dares to hope that in the face of such goodness, the pagan world will glorify God on the day of visitation. (word: “visit” often used in O.T. for the coming of God to his people; does not just refer to the final Day of Judgment; seen in N.T. in the prophecy of Zechariah – **Luke 1:68**) Biblical scholars have suggested that the “day of visitation” might refer to a time of conversion for pagans who see the faithful lives of Peter’s readers.

## FOR FURTHER CONVERSATION:

1. In his first epistle, Peter repeatedly uses “**YOU**” as a plural pronoun. As believers, God intends for us to work as a **team**; Christianity was never intended to be a solo act. How do you address those who avow no need and/or relevance for today’s church?
2. Most of us don’t face the kind of blatant persecution seen in the rest of today’s world. We prefer to “*blend in*” rather than “*stand out*” in the world. How would you respond to an avowed atheist and critic who, 40 years ago, made this biting comment to your facilitator when he was serving as Pastor of an Easton, PA church: “***Congratulations, some of you are wonderful secret agents for Jesus Christ. Your neighbors don’t suspect in the least that you are Christian!***” ???

## 2. First application of the principle of a living faith: RESPECT AUTHORITY! (2:13-15)

{AMP TRANSLATION}<sup>13</sup> **Be submissive to every human institution and authority for the sake of the Lord, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,** <sup>14</sup> **Or to governors as sent by him to bring vengeance (PUNISHMENT, JUSTICE) to those who do wrong and to encourage those who do good service.** <sup>15</sup> **For it is God's will and intention that by doing right [YOUR GOOD AND HONEST LIVES] should silence (MUZZLE, GAG) the ignorant charges and ill-informed criticisms of foolish persons.**

### HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE FURTHER INFORM OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH?

- A) Peter's reference to emperors and governors show that he is thinking specifically of political authorities. In this assertion he is no different than the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul. (see **ROMANS 13:1** and **TITUS 3:1**).
- B) Some people argue that this call for respect of governmental authority is in direct contradiction to an account in **ACTS 4:19** (However, the problem in Acts was that the Sanhedrin was commanding the church no longer to witness to Christ – a clear impossibility for any genuine believer!)
- C) The relationship of Christians to the state has been a problem since earliest days. The commands given by Peter and others, came in the context of persecutions and degradation under Nero. N.T. writers clearly thought that a bad government was better than no government.
- D) The apostle was convinced that the debauchery and foolishness of governmental leaders could best be condemned by moral excellence, rather than by verbal denunciation.

### FOR FURTHER CONVERSATION:

- 1) What reason is given for us to obey civil governments? What are the purposes of civil government?
- 2) Anti-government protests, both in the USA and worldwide, are part of current experience. As Christians, "where do we draw the line" in protest?
- 3) Recent developments in Ferguson, MO, have reignited civil rights protests there; in other American cities; and, worldwide. Should individual Christians be involved? Should the institutional church be involved? Considering Peter's teaching, what principles should guide us?

### 3.... Next application of the principle of a living faith: LIVE AS A FREE PEOPLE (2:16-17)

{AMP TRANSLATION}<sup>16</sup> [LIVE] **as free people**, [YET] **without employing your freedom as a pretext for wickedness; but** [LIVE AT ALL TIMES] **as servants of God.** <sup>17</sup> **Show respect for all men** [TREAT THEM HONORABLY]. **Love the brotherhood** (THE CHRISTIAN FRATERNITY OF WHICH CHRIST IS THE HEAD). **Reverence God. Honor the emperor.**

#### HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE FURTHER INFORM OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH?

- A) As citizens of heaven, no earthly power, person, or institution has authority and ultimate power over a Christian; but, this does not mean that a Christian refuses to cooperate or submit to anyone, as vs. 13 makes clear.
- B) What it does mean is that we answer to God, not to human authority, and God has set us free in Christ.
- C) The problem is that too many 'Christians' have taken the message of freedom as a license to do whatever they want.
- D) The only reliable guard against the misuse of "freedom" is to stay in step with the Holy Spirit Then the commands of vs. 17 can be fulfilled!

#### FOR FURTHER CONVERSATION:

- 1) What is the key phrase in these 2 verses?
- 2) What is the difference between a virtuous Christian who exhibits all the exemplary behaviors set forth in these verses, and the highly ethical atheist whose life may be just as virtuous?

#### A CLOSING PRAYER

#### DISMISSAL

#### NEXT CONVERSATIONS: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2014