

1 Peter 2:4-10

Introduction:

Why The Church?

Is the Church important? ... What does it exist for?

To hear some people talk, the Church exists to change the world...

Many might say that it exists as a social society meant for the betterment of humanity...

Others see it as a force for political power...

Others have no idea what to make of the Church...

Sadly, even most Christians see the Church merely as an addendum to life...

If it's important at all, it takes a back seat to their immediate family, their careers, and their hobbies...

They smile politely when you tell them that the early Church believed that *You can't have God as your Father if the Church is not your mother...*

In fact, some evangelicals get downright annoyed with that idea...

They accuse the early Christians of replacing Christ with the Church...

I've even heard people say, *Don't invite people to Church, invite them to Christ...*

Well, what does the Bible think of all this confusion?

Through our passage in 1 Peter, we'll try to answer that question today...

So let's look at our passage to see what the HS tells us through the apostle Peter...

As we do, I'll give you this main point that guides our study...

As they come to Christ, Christians are being formed into a spiritual community; therefore live not as individuals, but as a people called together for God's purposes.

I. A description of Christ v.4,6

- Peter begins by telling his readers what they can expect as they come to faith in Christ...
 - When he writes the words, *As you come to Him* he's specifically speaking of believing on Jesus as Savior...
 - Coming to Christ isn't just a one-time event, but is continuous...
 - The Christian is one who begins in faith, continues in faith, and ends in faith...
 - But before discussing the believer, Peter describes Jesus, to whom they come...
 - This is very important b/c what Jesus *is*, determines what God's people are...
 - Peter says that Jesus is a *living stone* (v.4)...
 - He goes on to say (v.6) that Jesus is a cornerstone, chosen & precious
 - This is taken from Is.28:16 where the corrupt rulers of Jerusalem believe themselves to be invincible to invasion...
 - But God shows them the folly of putting trust in the things of this world...
 - There's only one invincible building...
 - It's the spiritual temple built up by God himself...
 - God is laying a cornerstone for that building/temple...
 - Now, the cornerstone is the first stone set in place...
 - From that stone the entire foundation is joined together...
 - ...and upon that foundation the entire structure finds its support...
 - So the cornerstone is the most important and precious piece...
 - Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the house of God...

- But do you notice in v.4 that what God has chosen to be most important is also rejected by men...
- Isn't that so often how it is?...
 - What God loves, mankind hates ... What God calls precious, humans disdain...
 - In Mt.3 & 17 God speaks from heaven saying of Jesus...
 - *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased...*
 - And those to whom Jesus came rejected Him ... crucified Him...
 - This is still true today as so many reject Him...
 - And yet, in raising Him from the dead God had said once & for all time...
 - *This is My beloved – My precious Son...*
 - And what Peter is doing in v.4, 6 is pointing you back to Him...
 - He's pointing us all to the One who should be of the utmost importance to us...
 - He is the One who removed our shame when...
 - He took upon Himself the shame of our sin at the cross on Calvary...
 - And through faith ... He makes everyone who come to Him into...

II. Something glorious v.5

- Here Peter is speaking of the Church which is God's house...
 - Founded upon Christ, the Church is the temple of God...
 - Now, by the word "*church*" we don't mean a building made of brick & mortar...
 - We're talking about a different kind of building...
 - a living, breathing building...
 - Peter's talking about a people, in and among whom, God is present...
 - As you come to Christ you become the very building material of God's house/temple...
 - And this temple rests upon the Lord Jesus Himself...
 - He is the living foundation stone ... the cornerstone...
 - Just as Jesus is a living stone, those who come to Him – *each of you* - become...
 - ...the living stones that make up this house of God...
 - *...the place where His glory dwells* (Ps.26)
 - This temple – the people of God exists for worship ...
 - It's among God's people where spiritual sacrifice is offered...
 - Peter goes further and calls the Church *a holy priesthood*...
 - In the OT temple there was also a priesthood who served the Lord...
 - In this text, believers are that priesthood, and what they offer to God are...
 - ...their very lives, made holy & acceptable through Jesus Christ...
- Now that brings up two important points...
 - First: It is only through Jesus Christ that anything we do is acceptable to God...
 - Without Him, even our righteous deeds are tainted with sin, and called *filthy rags*...
 - But just as Jesus cleanses us by His blood so we can approach God...
 - His own sacrifice also makes everything we do for God acceptable...
 - Second: We often talk about having a personal relationship with Christ...
 - ...That's well and good...
 - But that relationship is never divorced from the Church...
 - God has called us into something much bigger than ourselves...
 - We can't be the house of God or His holy priesthood by ourselves...
 - We can only participate in these things joined together with other Christians...
 - That's why G&PPC puts a high premium on membership...
 - When Christ calls you, He calls you to the Church...

- Too much of our evangelism revolves around coming to Jesus, but ignoring the Church...
- That thinking is foreign to the Bible – Old or New Testament...
- We need to get back to understanding that belonging to the Church is...

III. A great honor v.7-8

- Do you see what Peter says in v.7a? ... The honor/esteem *is for you who believe*...
 - This statement would've been a great encouragement to the Christians Peter is writing to...
 - They were not highly esteemed ... they had no worldly honor...
 - They were persecuted, denigrated, and cast off from society...
 - But Peter says, *for you who believe* - i.e. for you who *press on* in face of adversity...
 - ...*for you who stand for Christ when the world despises you*...
 - He's says in a sense ... *You are highly honored*...
 - But who who is it that honors them?
 - It is God, who esteems them as precious, even as the Lord Jesus himself...
- And yet, not all will receive this honor...
 - Those who will not believe on Christ ... those who reject ultimately fulfill the word of God spoken through the prophets...
 - The very One who is the cornerstone of the Church becomes a stone on which the unbeliever stumbles...
 - To him/her Christ is scandalous/disgusting ... He is an offense...
 - And this Jesus who was sent to be the Savior becomes their condemnation...
 - This too is the will of God...
 - He who sent His most precious Son has determined that...
 - ...those who reject Him, will themselves be rejected...
 - And yet, there is still hope b/c God is establishing His Church to call unbelievers to Christ...
 - Bros & sisters, this is so important for Christians to understand...
 - We are living in times that are often very disheartening to believers...
 - We can get so tired of the constant drum beat of unbelief...
 - It seems like the world works overtime to belittle the Church...
 - Huge segments of society shoves immorality, unbelief, & hatred in its face...
 - And too often Christians want to shove back...
 - But what's Peter telling you?
 - You are a part of an ancient people ... called to follow Christ into the world...
 - You have a redemptive purpose in the plan of God...
 - As the Church, you are...

IV. The Israel of God v.9

- Now, Peter draws from various OT passages to describe the Church in v.9...
 - He's speaking of the Church as the Israel of God - *God's special people*...
 - It's important to understand that the Church doesn't replace Israel...
 - ...rather she's the completion or continuation of Israel...
 - As God's *chosen race* believers have a common ancestry with Abraham...
 - And they're related to one another through Christ, with God as their Father...
 - And just as Israel was called by God to be a nation of priests...
 - The Church, with Christ as her King, is a *royal priesthood*...
 - Yet believers you're not priests for your own benefit...
 - As believers, you are a priesthood for the nations...

- If you have come to Christ for salvation, it is b/c...
 - ...you've been chosen by God for His purposes ... you're *His own possession*...
 - God has called you out of the darkness of sin into the light of His grace...
 - And *why* has He called you?...
 - He has called you to proclaim His excellencies to a dying & needy world...
 - God has redeemed a people via Jesus Christ...
 - He has called them out of darkness to proclaim to the nations...
 - ...His deeds, mercy, power, glory, wisdom, & grace...
 - So together, as the Church, believers of all stripes are to live in such a way that...
 - ...makes God know to others, even as He is know to them...
 - ...You are called to tell the old story of God's great salvation in...
 - You are called to live as people changed by the Savior...
- But bros & sisters, I return to what I said earlier...
 - Such a life is not to be lived alone...
 - As the Israel of God, you are a *holy nation* – i.e. a separate people...
 - ...brought together for God's glory...
 - The Christian life was never meant to be a solitary endeavor...
 - We as Christians have a calling, but it is a calling we can only do together...
 - And as we share this mission to proclaim Christ, we are brought...

V. Together as a blessing v.10

- Peter writes to these Christians, dejected and troubled by many sorrows...
 - ...and he encourages them with two great blessings...
 - They might be rejected by the world, but they've really lost nothing...
 - In fact, they made great gains...
 - They were not a people ... they did not know God's mercy...
 - So they were cut off from the family of God...
 - They were without hope in this world...
 - They were destined for God's displeasure...
 - But here are the blessings...
 - In His great mercy God called them out of darkness & made them His people...
 - Brought to faith in Christ, redeemed by His blood, they're precious to God...
- Brothers and sisters this is true about you as well...
 - Together, as the Church of Christ, you are the people of God...
 - Please don't let those words simply drift away...
 - Consider them closely...
 - Every living stone in God's house is precious to Him...
 - And resting on Christ as your Savior, you have mercy and are a part of a great house ... the family of God...
 - The Christian cannot fulfill the purpose for which Christ has saved him/her apart from other believers...
 - *No one brick does a house make*, but together...
 - We are the Church – the temple of God – proclaiming His praises to the world...
 - This is why the Church is so important...
 - ...and why I began by saying...

As they come to Christ, Christians are being formed into a spiritual community; therefore live not as individuals, but as a people called together for God's purposes.