

(1) So, put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation --- if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good!

(4) As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stone 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," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

(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. 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.

(11) Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul. 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.

Think on these things:

- 1) Let's "unpack" the guidance of v.1 of things to "put away" from our lives. Use your own simple definition:

Malice – **A strong dislike or hatred towards another person**

Deceit – **Intentional acts and statements of dishonesty meant to mislead another/others**

Hypocrisy – **Basically talking about or saying one thing but doing another (the opposite)**

Envy – **In the bad sense, envy rises from rivalry and competition to have or achieve what another has earned or accomplished. It often results in disparaging actions and statements.**

Slander – **Making untrue statements about others to harm their reputation and standing.**

- 2) Read Hebrews 5:11-6:3. This is a discussion about 'spiritual milk.' What does Paul consider spiritual milk for Christians? He tells us in v.2 to "long" for it so we may grow up.

Milk = basic Christian doctrines: 1) We must repent from working for salvation by being people of faith; 2) Christian sacraments (like washings); 3) Praying for others by laying on of hands; 4) Bodily resurrection from death; and 5) Facing eternal judgment

- 3) From the Hebrews passage, what are Christians supposed to do as they "grow up?"

As Christians study, grow and learn, they OUGHT to become teachers and be more mature, using scriptures to "practice" discernment between right and wrong in life (Heb. 5:12-14).

- 4) From vs. 5 & 9, what are God's people referred to as (several "labels")? From Romans 12:1, what must Christians do to give God spiritual worship and sacrifices (v.5)?

"Living stones" that are part of God's spiritual house; a "holy priesthood" offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ; a "chosen race," "royal priesthood," "holy nation," and a "people for His own possession" to proclaim God's excellencies. Romans 12:1 declares that we do this by presenting our bodies as "living sacrifices," holy to God.

- 5) Who were the priests of the Old Testament, and who are the priests of the New Testament? Who is the High Priest of the New Testament (see Hebrews 10:11-13 and 19-22)?

In the Old Testament, Levites were the priests for the Jewish nation. In the New Testament, God's people constitute a "royal priesthood" (v.9). Jesus is the Christians' High Priest!

- 6) Can you explain what a cornerstone is and how it is used? How does this apply to Jesus?

Cornerstone is a building term. In ancient times with buildings of stone structure, typically a large stone was selected and squared up (chiseled) to be the first stone of the foundation, laid at a corner. Once put in place, all other stones of the foundation (longitude/latitude) were aligned according to this one to form the basic square (rectangle) shape of the building. Jesus is considered God's "Chief Cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19-22) ---meaning that He aligns the believer's "spiritual house." He is foundational to all that is "Christianity."

- 7) What is shared about believers and non-believers in vs. 6-8 with Jesus as our 'Cornerstone'?

Whoever believes in Jesus as God's Cornerstone will not be put to shame (v.6), and honor belongs to those who believe (v.7). To non-believers who reject Jesus as the cornerstone --- disobeying the Word of God --- He becomes their stumbling block. They are offended by Him and His truth/teachings (v.8).

- 8) V.9 says we are a "chosen people...for His own possession." What a blessing to be cherished by God! Once we were not a people --- so how did we suddenly become God's people (v.10)?
We became God's people when we received God's mercy (forgiveness and grace) to be saved.

- 9) Let's end with practical commands (vs.11-12). What are we to NOT do, and what are we TO do? Whose soul is at stake here, and where is this battle? Consider Romans 6:12-14 and 7:21-25, Ephesians 6:10-12, and 1 Peter 5:8 in this last answer. This is why we declare the excellencies of God, because He has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (v.9)!

We are NOT to live by the passions of our flesh, which war against our souls, but rather TO live honorably among non-believers (Gentiles) so that any accusations of "evil doing" are baseless. Instead, our conduct and good deeds should glorify God! --- It is our own soul on the line here! Romans 6 says don't let sin reign over us, but yield our bodies to doing righteousness while living under God's grace. Romans 7 says the sin battle is fought in our heads, but, thankfully, Jesus can deliver us! 1 Peter 5 says Satan roams around looking for people he can devour by sin, so we need to be constantly alert to this struggle.

People and situations I want to pray for this week: