

## 1 Peter 2:4-10 Part D

1Pe 2:6 (NKJV) **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."**  
<sup>7</sup> **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,"** <sup>8</sup> **and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense."** They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. <sup>9</sup> **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;** <sup>10</sup> **who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.**

In v6-8, Peter quotes three Old Testament passages – the first from [Isaiah 28:16](#), the second from [Psalm 118:22](#), and the third from [Isaiah 8:14](#). The content of these passages is about the person of Christ. In v6 He is called the “**chief cornerstone**”, is said to be “**elect**” and “**precious**”, and that if a person believes in Him that they “**will by no means be put to shame**”. In v7, if someone truly believes, Christ is “**precious**” to them. However, if someone disbelieves, He becomes a “**stone of stumbling**” and a “**rock of offense**” to them. Because of how they view Christ, Peter says that they “**stumble**” over Him and become “**disobedient to the word**”.

Now, what we want to do is to look at this idea of what it means for a lost person to “**stumble**” and to be “**disobedient**”. The reason is because in v9-10, Peter gives a very distinct contrast between the lost person and the saved person. We know that it is a contrast because he uses the word “**But**”. He says in v10 that we “**once were not...but now are**”. That is the continuing contrast. Notice once again in v9-10 that the true believer is proclaiming Christ, proclaiming His praise. That is one of the marks of a genuine believer. The true believer knows and understands that they have been “**called...out of darkness into His marvelous light**” and that they “**now have obtained mercy**”, and those two realities create in them a constant praise for God and what He has done for them. So, on one hand, we have someone who is stumbling and is disobedient, and on the other hand we have someone who is praising Christ and is walking in “**His marvelous light**”. So, it is important to appreciate that Peter is creating a contrast between someone who is truly saved and someone who is genuinely lost. That should be obvious with the word “**But**”.

The first reality to see is that Christ is both the problem and the answer. To the lost person, He is their problem, but to the believer, He is the solution. In v4-5, the believer is constantly “**coming**” to Christ and in that process being “**built up**” with other believers and learning how to live a life of “**sacrifice**” that is pleasing to God. However, in v7 and 8, those who are not believers are “**disobedient**”. In then NKJV, Peter uses the word “**disobedient**” twice to explain a chief characteristic of lost people. However, the word “**disobedient**” in v7 is probably not a good translation. The NASB, AMP, and ASV use the word “**disbelieve**”. The ESV, NIV, RSV, and ISV use the word “**do not believe**”. So, the idea in the word is not that of being disobedient, but simply of not believing.

The actual word in v7 for “**disobedient**” is the Greek word “*apisteo*” and is actually translated in the Greek Interlinear as “**to the unbelieving ones**”. It comes from the negative prefix “*a*” and the basic Greek word for faith or belief which is “*pistis*”. So, it has the idea of not believing and should literally

be considered as the very opposite of the word ‘faith’, or what we might call “no faith, not faith”. Now, it should be both apparent and easy to understand the connection between not believing and being disobedient. If someone is not a believer, it is obvious that they will not be obedient to the Word of God. That characteristic is inherent in the idea of not believing God. In fact, in the technical definition of this particular word it means by implication to “disobey”, and that is probably why the KJV and NKJV actually translate it as disobey. The implication is that the unbeliever has had a full opportunity to believe, but has rejected the truth and actually refuses to believe something that they know is true.<sup>1</sup> I.e., the ultimate result of not believing God and His Word will always lead to disobedience. The example of what the religious leaders did when they heard that Nicodemus had been raised from the dead is that they took counsel how they might kill Christ. They literally refused to believe. They intellectually knew exactly what had taken place, but simply would not allow themselves to believe. In the face of overwhelming evidence, they willfully rejected what they knew to be true.

The second word for “**disobedient**” in v8 is a similar, but different Greek word. It is the word “*apeitheo*” and it means to disbelieve something both willfully and perversely. It speaks of lost people in [Romans 2:5-8](#), specifically v8,

**Ro 2:5 (NKJV) But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, <sup>6</sup> who "will render to each one according to his deeds": <sup>7</sup> eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; <sup>8</sup> but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness--indignation and wrath,**

It is the word that is used to describe those who refused to believe God in the wilderness. [Hebrews 3:18](#) says,

**Heb 3:18 (NKJV) And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?**

It is used to describe those people at the time of the flood who refused to believe. [1 Peter 3:20](#) says,

**1Pe 3:20 (NKJV) who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.**

This word specifically means that the individual refuses to be persuaded, refuses to believe, and in that process becomes very disobedient to God’s Word.<sup>2</sup> Disobedience is inevitable and unavoidable. This particular Greek word should be understood as unbelief rather than as disobedience. For instance, it is the same Greek word used in [John 3:36](#) which says,

**Jn 3:36 (NKJV) He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."**

The Greek Interlinear translates the phrase “**who does not believe**” as “**the one disobeying**”. The NASB, ESV, AMP, ASV, ISV, and RSV all translate it with the word “**disobey**” or “**disobeying**”. The verb is in the present tense and active voice meaning that those people who are constantly disobeying are doing so as an act of their will and “**shall not see life**”. Continued disobedience is a clear and distinct characteristic of unbelief. In fact, to make it even worse, [1 Peter 2:8](#) adds the phrase which says “**to**

**which they also were appointed**". Some of the translations (ESV, AMP, NIV, ISV, RSV) use the word "**destined**". Think of this idea of being "**appointed**" like this. If you put your hand in water, it will get wet. If you stick your hand in a fire, it will get burnt. It is inevitable, expected, certain, and bound to happen. It is unavoidable and what could actually be considered as predestined and preordained. I.e., if a person will not believe, then it is unavoidable that they will disobey.

The nuance of this word, however, specifically implies that a person has an unwillingness to be persuaded, a willful unbelief, and a continuing stubbornness, persistence, and determination that they will not yield themselves to that which is obvious. Peter probably used this word in the second use because it is a stronger term than the first word for not believing. This word implies a greater resistance, a greater stubbornness. I had the opportunity to speak to a believer recently about a very difficult circumstance that they were facing with someone, and my encouragement to them was that they had to exercise self-control in what they said to the other person. However, the individual said that even though they knew that was what God wanted them to do that they did not think that they could respond nicely. They actually quoted Scripture and told me that what was in their heart was going to come out of their mouth. In essence, they were refusing to believe God. We as believers cannot claim to believe God and then just disobey Him. Not sure what that is.

Now, if this idea of disbelieving is going to be fully understood, then it is important to understand what it really means to have "**faith**" (Greek – "*pistis*") and to "**believe**" (Greek – "*pisteuo*"). Biblical faith really involves two distinct and separate attributes. First, the individual must receive the message of salvation that is presented as the gospel – Jesus died, Jesus was buried, Jesus was resurrected, and in so doing He paid the full penalty and the full price needed to secure salvation. That is the first reality of biblical faith – believing the gospel. The second aspect which is integral to this belief is the idea of the individual's conduct based on accepting the gospel. This is the inevitable result of genuine faith, of genuine belief – the idea that now the individual is willing to allow the message that they have claimed to believe to actually impact and effect their life. For someone to claim that they believe Christ, but it never have an impact on their life is actually a charade, an illusion, and a kind of spiritual hallucination or mirage. It could just be called "make-believe". Children all the time are playing "make-believe" and acting as if they are something that they are not, but adults do this all the time with Christ and biblical faith. For someone to say that they believe, but that belief never impact their life is a spiritual pretense, a deception, and a sad fabrication that will only be a tragedy for them on the day that they meet Christ face to face.

The second aspect of biblical faith and believing is more related to the qualifying aspects of faith. Biblical faith, just like anything else of value, always has certain attributes that are visible and evident. It involves trusting God and His Word. It involves growing in the knowledge of God and how He has chosen for believers to live. It involves making decisions, not on the basis of what the individual may want, but rather on the basis of what God wants for that individual. It involves obedience, compliance with, submission to, respect for, and conformity to the Word of God.<sup>3</sup> That person who claims to believe Christ and His Word, but who lacks these developing and governing attributes in their life simply are self-deceived.

In the Christian life there is always a struggle taking place. It is always there. The tension between obedience and disobedience is always present in the believer's life. It is a tension that could be

characterized between the difference of the indicative and the imperative. The indicative is the mood of fact and the imperative is the mood of command. The struggle, and it is a very real struggle, is between the Spirit of God who lives within the believer and the law of sin that is in them as well. The Holy Spirit is always pulling in one direction and the law of sin in their members is always pulling in the exact opposite direction. This is the struggle and reality that Paul delineated and addressed in [Romans 7](#). It is the idea of the believer becoming in their practice what they are in their position, and believing God and obeying God is what gives the believer power in the conflict.<sup>4</sup> Both Paul and Peter, as well as the rest of the New Testament, acknowledge the fact that the Spirit of God within the believer is much stronger than the law of sin that is operating in them. If the Scriptures acknowledge that, then the believer has to acknowledge that. For instance, [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) says,

**1Co 10:13 (NKJV) No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.**

There is no promise here to remove the temptation, but a promise of power to bear it, to endure it – and that is exactly what the believer is called on to do.

To state all of this another way, a believer's life and their faith cannot be separated. They are not the same thing, but they are integrally interwoven with one another and are inseparable from each other. For instance, [1 John 2:15-17](#) speak of this connection between life and faith when it says,

**1Jn 2:15 (NKJV) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.**

This is the tension between the imperative (“do not love”) and the indicative (“if anyone loves”). The Christian life is a very unique faith-event. It begins with an initial act of faith, but then it continues with acts of personal faith in the abiding truths of God's Word. To disconnect initial saving faith from ongoing faith is impossible. To communicate it theologically would be to say that justification and sanctification cannot be separated. Once justified, the believer will be sanctified. So, if someone simply claims to be saved, but their life never reflects that salvation other than just a verbal expression of something that has no impact on their life, then in reality they are not truly saved. The problem is that what all of us want to do is to give everyone the benefit of the doubt. None of us are opposed to grace. We know, we appreciate the grace of God on our personal lives, so there should never be any hesitation for us to accept the grace of God being demonstrated in His patience and longsuffering for those people who profess Christ, but lack the evidence of possessing Christ. I have no problem in erring on the side of grace, but at the same time, that does not eliminate the responsibility to remain true to the truth of Scripture and the biblical evidences of genuine salvation.

So, what is it that Peter says the lost person actually does? He says in v8 that they “**stumble**”. Let me say it a different way – “**being disobedient**” (v8) is the evidence of stumbling. The Greek word is “*proskopto*”. The word for “**stumble**” comes from the prefix “*pros*” which means “against” and the word “*kopto*” which means “to cut or to strike”, or literally to cut or strike against, often to dash. It is the same word that would be used if someone dashed their foot on a stone when they were walking.<sup>5</sup>

The verb is in the present tense meaning that they are constantly stumbling over Christ. It is my opinion that in the use of this word that it would be reasonable to say that not only are people stumbling over Christ, but also they are consciously striking against Christ. They are opposed to Christ in a very demeaning way. They come to the very One who can save them, forgive them, and give eternal life, and they literally hate Him and His demands on their life. They want nothing to do with Christ. I just love the word “**precious**” (Greek – “*entimon*”). It means unequalled in value, costly, irreplaceable. It also says that the one who believes in Christ will not be put to shame. The NASB seems to capture the essence of the meaning when it says that they “**will not be disappointed**” (Greek – *kataischyno*). The word denotes being deceived or of placing your hope in someone and having that hope in them being dashed to pieces.<sup>6</sup> Listen very carefully. On the day that God brings you into His kingdom, there will not be one single ounce of disappointment for you. You are not going to say “*Wow, what a depressing and disheartening place to be. This is a complete and total disappointment, and an utter waste of my entire life.*” Rather, you are going to say “*Wow, what an incredible and amazing place to be. This is beyond my wildest dreams! I had no idea whatsoever how great this place was going to be! Amazing!*” No one who arrives in God’s presence permanently is going to say to God the Father or Christ, “*Would you please send me to hell. I absolutely do not want to be here! This place is awful!*” – not one single person!! [1 Corinthians 2:9](#) seems to sum it up the best when it says,

1Co 2:9 (NKJV) **But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."**

## **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Strong, 972.

<sup>2</sup> Strong, 970.

<sup>3</sup> Verbrugge, 464.

<sup>4</sup> Verbrugge, 465.

<sup>5</sup> Strong, 1340.

<sup>6</sup> MacArthur, 121.

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