

You Are God's People

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[0 : 00] I do believe that our text for today is one of the most important passages in this book. It's centered entirely on the gospel. It is flowing out of all of the gospel hope that we see preceding it.

I Certainly even itself contains the gospel. It clarifies for us what it actually means to belong to God. And then it also declares the purpose of our lives, the purpose of our existence, not only as creatures, but the purpose of our existence as the church, providing the foundation for everything that God says through Peter in this letter.

I think it's contained in the verses that we are studying today. And it's brief, it's simple, it's not that it's that complex, but it does demand our earnest attention. And we want to give that attention to it now.

1 Peter 2, verses 4-10. 1 Peter 3, verses 5-10.

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.

[1 : 47] They stumble because they disobeyed the word as they were destined to do. 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.

Amen. I want to think about this text first and I think maybe foremost in relationship to the idea of identity. One's received identity, that is what has been given to them by God, comes with a serious weight of responsibility.

For example, those of you here today who are husbands and fathers, you bear the weight and the responsibility of loving, leading, protecting, providing for your family.

That is a weight of responsibility you have that flows out of a received identity that has been given to you by God. That responsibility doesn't belong to your wife ultimately.

[3 : 21] It doesn't belong to your children's school ultimately or their coaches. It doesn't belong ultimately to our government. It doesn't even ultimately belong to the church.

It belongs to you men. You alone will stand before God and answer to him for how you carried out your duty and responsibility as a husband and as a father.

And we can apply that in a lot of different ways, can't we? But the truth remains the same. No matter what the situation is, what God makes you, your received identity, carries a significant weight of responsibility.

And that responsibility is to be embraced, not begrudging. It is to be pursued, not abandoned.

And the reason it is to be pursued, the reason it is to be embraced, is because it comes from God, who does all things as we have sung today, for his glory and for our good.

- [4 : 25] One of the major points of emphasis in 1 Peter that we have discerned already in this letter is that what we do flows out of or at least should be consistent with who we are. And that's not only clear in Peter's content, in the things that he's saying. I think it's actually made even more clear in the structure with which he says them. Think about what we've studied so far in this letter. Peter begins with focusing on our identity as God's children. There's all of that familial language in the first section of the book. Through the new birth, God gives us hope, opens us and awakens us to the hope of the resurrection of Jesus. Awakens us to hope in our future inheritance in heaven, our eternal salvation. That's our identity. We are his children. Therefore, we will receive his eternal inheritance. And that hope is given to us in his son, Jesus Christ.
- [5 : 33] And it's based on that gospel identity that Peter then issued a number of moral imperatives to those who then call on God as father. There was a number of them that we've already studied through. They must set their hope on grace. They must pursue holiness. They must pursue holiness. Not conforming to the passions of their former ignorance. They must live in the fear of God. They must earnestly love one another. And they must long like newborn infants to grow on the milk of God's word. Now, as Peter begins to close this first major section of the letter, he moves from those commands to address our identity once again. And like the opening section, there are no imperatives here. There is not a single explicit imperative in these verses.
- [6 : 32] It's all indicative. So Peter is sandwiching. If you notice the structure, he is sandwiching the moral imperatives of God for God's people, for the church, for Christians, in between two groups of indicatives to show that who we are as God's children, who we are as God's people, dictates how we must live. And still, these verses that we are studying today, they're not exact repetitions of the earlier indicatives. The focus is on who we are, not as mere individuals here. The focus is on who we are collectively as the church of Christ. And the key phrase is in verse 10, if you want to set your eyes on it. Once you were not a people, here's the key to what Peter is saying in this whole book, I think. Now you are God's people. You are his people collectively. In this statement of identity, it's anchoring the letter. In this passage, Peter reminds us how we become God's people. He shows us what marks God's people. And then, of course, he further reveals the purpose that God gives to his people during their time of exile.
- [7 : 58] So we don't want to forget the overall context of exile. We are God's people. We do not belong to this world. We have a different king. We serve a different kingdom. We serve a different law. And in that, that's what Peter is helping us to grow firm in now. Three things I want to point out to you. First, I want you to see that God's people are marked by faith in Jesus Christ. God's people are marked by faith in Jesus Christ. Now just think for a moment. If there is a group that is designated as the people of God, that must also mean that there is a group that categorically does not belong to God. The idea that we are all God's children or that we are all God's people is logically inconsistent with the whole of the Bible.

It's refuted repeatedly in Peter's letter. So what exactly marks out God's people in the world? If there are some people who make up the people of God and there are other people who do not, what identifies the groups?

[9:12] What marks them out in the world? How does one become part of God's people? And the simple answer is in the very first phrase of verse 4. God's people are those who come to Jesus by faith.

As you come to him, that is, Jesus Christ, you are being made into God's people.

We see it also again in verse 7. The honor, honor there being contrasted with the end of verse 6, put to shame in final judgment, is being contrasted here with honor.

Those who will not be put to shame, but will instead be honored in the judgment alongside of Christ, are those, he says in verse 7, who believe.

Believe what? Believe Jesus. Believe in him. But Peter doesn't stop there. He employs this series of metaphors.

[10:11] Just so fun, isn't it? It's so funny that all of these metaphors that he gives us here to describe what it means to actually come to Christ describes what God is doing with those who do come to Christ.

And he borrows them all. None of them are original to Peter. Every one of them he borrows from the Old Testament. Three come from explicit quotations.

Peter quotes three different times Isaiah and Psalm 118. But even beyond the direct quotations, there are other allusions to other passages in the Old Testament that Peter is using.

He's grabbing these metaphors in order that he might help us to understand. This is not simply Peter's idea. He's not just coming up with this.

Following Jesus, he and the other apostles looked to the word of God in the Old Testament and proclaimed that Jesus was the fulfillment of it. And that all of God's people are those who are in him by faith.

[11:16] Now the three quotations, they're the ones that carry the primary metaphor which concerns a stone. Now if you read through your Old Testament and you do it at lightning speed, you're going to pick up on the fact that stone is often used in the Old Testament as a picture.

And the Jews generally interpreted the stone in those pictures usually as either the nation of Israel, the city of Jerusalem, or the temple itself.

And then we get to the New Testament and the Gospels and we find that Jesus does this very controversial thing. It's the reason that the Jewish leaders wanted to kill him.

He comes in and using this very picture as well as others, he declares that he himself is actually the fulfillment of all of those stone pictures and prophecies that are associated with them.

If you just want to write down the reference, Matthew 21 and verse 42, you'll see in one of the parables, he does it multiple times, but you'll see in one of the parables, Jesus quoting the same passage that Peter quotes and saying, that's not Israel, that's not Jerusalem, that's not the temple, that is me.

[12:31] And so Peter uses these metaphors to show that the people of God are not marked by geographic boundaries. They are not marked by ethnicity or race or lineage.

They are not marked by sacred places of worship. Indeed, I would say that what Peter is affirming here is that there are no sacred places of worship any longer.

In the New Covenant, Israel is not the people of God. The church is the people of God. The people of God, Jew and Gentile alike, are marked out by coming in faith to the living stone, Jesus Christ.

But what is it exactly that we are believing about Jesus Christ? Well, there's a number of things, but there's a couple of significant things that Peter points to in these metaphors.

Notice, all of the metaphors contrast those who reject the stone with those who believe in the stone.

[13:44] We see it in verse 4. As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God, chosen and precious.

Or precious there is the sense of honor. Chosen and honored. And then we get to verse 4. Verse 6. This quotation of Isaiah.

Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious. Whoever believes won't be put into shame, but there are those who do not believe.

And in quoting Psalm 118, he says they have rejected the stone that God has chosen to be the cornerstone. Now, what do we make of this?

It's actually quite clear when you begin to piece it together. Jesus is the stone that was rejected by men. He says that clearly. He says that clearly. An illusion, not merely to the fact that the Jewish leaders disliked him, but that they murdered him.

[14:45] It's an illusion to his death on the cross. That's important. That was not just an ordinary death. It was a substitutionary death.

The son of God, sinless, takes on the wrath of God in the place of sinners. And yet, though rejected by men, Jesus was chosen and precious or honored in the sight of God.

I think being a clear allusion to his resurrection. Hence, Peter says, as you come to him, a living stone. What is it that he's doing with these pictures?

Jesus was chosen to be the Savior before the foundation of the world. We saw that in chapter 1 and verse 20. He was honored by God in his resurrection and exaltation. We've seen that as early as verse 3 of chapter 1.

That he has caused us to be born again to a living hope in the resurrection. It's all about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In other words, God's people are marked out first and foremost by their faith in the atoning death of Jesus on the cross and his subsequent resurrection from the dead.

[16:06] And here's the truth. All people stand in only one of two places in relation to Jesus Christ. They either believe in him, his death and resurrection, and receive the honor of salvation, or seven.

Or they stumble over him in offense and unbelief, put to shame in the final judgment.

Faith in Jesus and exclusively Jesus is how one becomes part of the people of God. It's not religious affiliation.

It's not membership in the church necessarily. It's not your baptism. It's not the partaking in the Lord's Supper. It's not the best works that you can do.

You can look like the most faithful Christian in the world and still stumble over Christ in unbelief. The people of God are not marked primarily by those things.

[17:18] They are marked by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And then look and see what Peter is using this metaphor. He's telling us also that those who come to faith in Jesus Christ, God is doing something with them collectively as a people.

Jesus is the living stone and all who come to him in faith are themselves like living stones, Peter says. Their life is in him.

And God is using them, here's another metaphor, to build a spiritual house. This is a temple. Clearly a reference to the Old Testament temple. And he's saying this sacred space that the people of God used to identify with, it's no longer important.

The people themselves collectively are this temple now. They are the place in which God dwells. And they are a holy priesthood, he says.

All of them. A kingdom of priests. Not a select few. All of them. A kingdom of priests. Representing God to the kingdoms of this world.

[18:27] What we've been calling exile up to this point in 1 Peter. And their sacrifices, our sacrifices, are not of bulls and goats.

For Christ is our Passover lamb, offered once for all of our sins. Rather, our sacrifices are spiritual. The sacrifices of the works of the Holy Spirit in persevering faith and in sincere worship and in loving service on account of the gospel of Jesus and in his name.

What's Peter saying? This is amazing. It is so simple, isn't it? We complicate it. It's so simple. The people of God are those who know Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection.

And are being built into a dwelling place for God. And a priesthood for God. So that they might offer spiritual sacrifices to him in this world. And in eternity.

Second. God's people are chosen according to his electing love. God's people are chosen according to his electing love.

[19:42] Now it comes as a bit of a surprise to us, doesn't it? When we get to the end of verse 8 and then the beginning of verse 9. We almost don't expect this. But if we take the whole letter as a whole. We see this is actually quite consistent with everything Peter has been saying.

Notice at the end of verse 8. These people who do not believe, who stumble over Christ. They stumble because they disobey the word. That is the gospel. We learn that at the end of chapter 1.

Verse 25. And this word is the good news that was preached to you. The gospel of Jesus Christ. They stumble over the gospel. As they were destined to do.

But you, the people of God. Are a chosen race. And royal priesthood. And holy nation. A people for his own possession.

Now God's electing love in salvation. Is a crucial component of Peter's arguments in this letter. And he directs us to it again here.

[20:43] But it's the first time that he refers to the other side of divine election. What we call reprobation. He says that those who stumble over Christ in unbelief.

Are destined to do so. That's a heavy doctrine. Controversial doctrine.

Depending on your take. But logically we understand. You can't have one without the other. If God has eternally chosen some people.

To be his people. Then it necessarily means that he has chosen some people. Not to be his people. If some are elected unto salvation.

Then necessarily some are elected to damnation. And he does all of this according to his good and sovereign purposes.

[21:47] The mystery here is not in whether or not God is sovereign in salvation. That's not really the mystery. The mystery is how God is sovereign in salvation.

Without violating man's agency. Or himself becoming complicit in the sin of unbelief. And Peter comes to it and he kind of drops this bomb here.

And moves on. And he doesn't explain very much about it. And the reason is because this isn't ultimately about reprobation. He's using reprobation to strengthen his point on election.

And we're going to get to that. But just for sake of the moment. And since we're here. I think it would be helpful for us to think on this for just a moment. The Bible holds all of this in tension.

It affirms God's sovereignty and salvation. It also affirms man's responsibility to respond to the gospel call. We've already seen it in this very text.

[22 : 45] It also affirms that God neither sins nor tempts anyone to sin. So how do we make sense of this?

I think you're reasonable people. You are capable of studying out the scriptures. And I would encourage you to do that. There's only so much I can say at this point. But let me at least give a suggestion for you that I think is accurate.

And then we'll get to why Peter even brings it up. We shouldn't deny the parallel truths of election and reprobation. But we do need to acknowledge a distinction in how God carries them out.

In election, God makes a saving action. We've seen this saving action spelled out in this first chapter. In eternity past, God sets his divine and saving love on his people.

Before they're created. Before they sin. God sets his love on them. And then he sees through. Sees that love through. In the work of Christ.

[23 : 52] He sends Christ. Christ accomplishes the mission of our salvation. And then he calls us. There's a general call that all receive in the gospel.

There's an effectual call of the gospel. God calling his people so that they will then respond in faith. He calls them, in Peter's language, out of darkness into his marvelous light.

He calls us to be born again, we see in chapter 1. Which removes the blinders of sin. It shines the light of the glory of Christ into our hearts. And we respond in repentance and faith of our own will.

God doesn't do the believing for us. But neither would we repent and believe apart from this new birth. So we can affirm an election.

And we should affirm an election. That repentance and faith are true acts of the will. And also glorious graces. Gifts from God.

[25 : 02] So what about reprobation then? How is it different? I think it's different in this sense. That if election takes a saving action on God's part.

Reprobation is simply choosing not to take that action. That saving action. Instead passing over unbelievers. And leaving them in their sin.

He gives them over, Romans 1. To what their wills actually want most. Which is not him. And not obedience.

And not faith. It's their own sin. Self. And deception. So then we should affirm.

That nothing prevents the greatest sinner on earth. From salvation. Rejection. But his own sin. And voluntary rejection. Of the gospel.

[26 : 00] Now I'll let you work that out further. Since Peter doesn't expound on the idea. Why does he bring it up? What's the purpose in even saying it here? Well I think it's actually an important purpose. The emphasis on sovereignty.

It provides. Significant weight. To our identity as God's people. Think about the big picture here. Of this letter. This is exile.

We're strangers. We're marked out. There are moral imperatives. That we must obey. Why? Because God chose us.

Because we're his. By divine appointment. And except for the grace of God. We would also stumble. In unbelief.

But he has chosen us. To be his people. This strengthens. It comforts. It assures those. Who are suffering in. And struggling through.

- [27 : 02] This time of exile. I think that's why Peter's bringing up. I think it's actually quite clear. That's why he's bringing it up. It supplies us. With humility. It supplies us with hope. And it supplies us. With genuine worship. Humility. Because we understand our salvation. To ultimately be the work of God's grace.

Hope. Because God's eternal plan. Has gone to such incredible lengths. To secure our eternal salvation. No enemy in this life. Or in the next.

Can thwart that purpose of grace. This is God's doing. It's marvelous in our eyes. That's Paul's entire point. At the end of Romans 8.

That him. Those whom he predestined. He called. And those whom he called. He sanctified. And those whom he sanctified. He will glorify. And then he says. If God is for us.

- [27 : 58] Who can be against us? Peter's saying the same thing. In a different way here. He's reminding these Christians. Who are suffering. And struggling in exile. Under the weight of the world.

And of hatred. And of persecution. And he's saying. Look. If God is for you. It doesn't matter who's against you. He will win. His purposes of grace. Will not be thwarted.

Comfort. Hope. And then it supplies worship. Doesn't it? Worship. Because it reveals the full expression. Of God's justice and mercy.

So that we might approach him with fear. And trembling. Did you pick up on what was happening in Exodus 20. Around the decalogue. The decalogue is important.

What's happening around it? God says. This is who I am. I'm a just God. And on those who disbelieve and disobey. I will pour out my judgment.

- [28 : 57] But for those who will believe and love and obey. I will pour out my mercy and my grace. And he gets to the end. And what do we see happening with the nation of Israel?

With a true vision of God. And his glory. And his holiness. And his justice. And not yet a full glimpse of his mercy.

They say. Moses. You talk to us. Don't let him talk to us. Or we'll die. Those of us who belong to God in Christ.

And understand that we do so because of God's grace. Can approach the Lord with true worship. Knowing that but for his grace. We cannot stand before him.

And we will die. But because of his grace. We understand and know the full expression of his love and his mercy. And what does that produce in us?

- [29 : 56] Not pride. Because there's nothing good in us. Humility. And worship. So that we can be genuinely moved as we sing the words.

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord. Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt. Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured. There were the blood of the Lambas spilled.

Grace. Grace. God's grace. Grace that's greater than all our sin. God's people are chosen according to his electing love.

Finally. Our purpose as God's chosen people is simply his glory. His glory.

Why do you exist? First as a creature. If you're a Christian. Why do you exist as a Christian?

[30 : 55] And as part of the people of God collectively. Why do we exist as God's people? Why is God chosen and redeemed the people for his own possession? What is this purpose?

And being his people in the world. Very clear. Verse 10. That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness.

That's that electing love. He called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light. So that you might proclaim his glory in the world. And how do we do that?

Well most obviously it's through the proclamation of truth. We literally proclaim the excellencies of the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus. And I think that comes through the display of genuine worship.

And the idea here in 1 Peter 2 is not our private worship at home or our personal worship that may be before our friends. Though I think that's true. It is collectively our worship together as the people of God.

[32 : 02] A display of proclaiming the excellencies of him who called not me. Who called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

Through worship and evangelism we proclaim his glory as the priesthood that represents him to the world. Another important connection to the Old Testament is here in verse 9.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession. That's not Peter's language. That's God's language in Exodus chapter 19.

Write that in your margins. You can read it later. Almost word for word Peter quotes it and he says just what God was doing then with a physical people in the nation of Israel. That's who you are. You're chosen.

You're a priesthood. Not just a select few. All of you. A nation of priests. We see that echoed again in Revelation chapter 1. That Christ has made us a kingdom of priests to his God.

[33 : 01] And what was the nation doing as a priesthood in Exodus 19? They weren't offering sacrifices there. They were displaying the glory of God to the other kingdoms around them in the world.

And what is God doing through his church now? We are a priesthood before him. We are to display his glory to the kingdom of this world.

And we do this through living in holy obedience to him. As presented from a general perspective in the imperatives that preceded this section.

The darkness out of which he called us is the former ignorance that we are not to be conformed to in chapter 1 and verse 14. It is the futile ways and the futile thinking and the deception of this world that we read in chapter 1 and verse 18.

That's the darkness that he calls us out of. And he transforms us. And then we live in holiness and proclaim God's truth. Because James says friendship with the world and its ideas and its philosophies is to be the enemy of God.

[34 : 07] But we are not God's enemy. We are his people. Therefore, it is for us to live as his people. His priest in the world. Not to conform to this world and its ideas.

But to conform to the scriptures. And what God says. That's how we display his glory. That's what it means to serve the purpose of being God's people in exile.

If we fail to preach the gospel. If we do not represent him in our worship. If we conform to and accommodate sin.

We will fail to serve our purpose as his people. Indeed, we may even prove that we aren't his people to begin with. Because those who are his have been called out of darkness into light.

But it's a state in which they are in now. And they will obey the prompts of God as his people. How can we work this out practically as a church?

[35 : 13] To live as God's people. To proclaim his glory. I think it's why it's necessary for us to have a robust and clear confession of faith. That guides us and guards our congregation.

As we submit to healthy doctrine. I'm going to present a confession of faith to you today in our members meeting. That I think is important. This is part of the reason why. Because we're God's people.

And we need to have some things that help mark us out as God's people. And guard us as God's people. To proclaim God's glory is why it would be good for us to cooperate with like-minded churches.

For gospel missions. It's not just about what we're doing at Lakeside Bible Church. We are part of God's people. Big picture.

Global. And we want to be a part of that. Proclaim his glory alongside our brothers and sisters all across the world. To live as God's people.

[36 : 14] To proclaim his glory is why we gather Sunday by Sunday. To preach the word. And to read the word. And to sing the word. And to pray the word.

And to display the word in the ordinances. That's why. It's to display his glory. Therefore, be here as you are.

Sunday by Sunday. Sunday. To declare his glory. To live as God's people. To proclaim his glory is why we show courage. To stand against the wicked ways of the world.

And to hold one another accountable to holiness. To live as God's people and proclaim his glory. Is why we must work to love one another. As we studied last week. Showing the glory of the gospel.

In our union with Christ. And we could say many other things. But we're his people. Once we were not a people. Now we're his people.

[37 : 13] Once we had not received mercy. But now. Because we have come to the living stone. We have received mercy. Through him.

Eternal mercy. Loved ones. This is who we are. We're marked by faith. We're chosen by God. We're called to proclaim his glory.

And that means that we will have to endure some hardship in this life. Suffer on account of our faith. And the outworking of that faith.

And the way that we live. That's what the Christians to whom Peter was writing were dealing with. It's a big part of this letter. But if we're God's people. We must live as God's people.

We must grasp and glory in the hope of our future inheritance. After this time of exile. Keeping our minds focused there. Chapter 1 verse 13.

[38 : 09] Set your hope fully on grace. We must represent our father and our God to the world. Not because it's easy or convenient. Because it almost never will be.

But because it's good. And it's right. And it's what he's called us to. We must remain focused. On the gospel of Jesus.

Our Lord and Savior. For it is the source of our salvation. And our hope. And our wisdom for living. We must endure. We must proclaim.

We must be holy. Why? Because we are God's people. That's who we are.