

God's Choice

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Preacher: Rev Donald A Macdonald

[0 : 00] Let us now turn to the passage that we read. First letter of Peter in chapter 2. We may read again at verse 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. In this letter, Peter, I believe, is fulfilling the remit given to him when he was publicly restored to office by the Lord Jesus Christ.

You remember the remit that was given to him, feed my lambs, tend and feed my sheep. He did it for the remaining years of his life.

And although he has long gone to his eternal rest, he is still continuing to fulfill that remit. More than 2,000 years later, through this letter.

[1 : 25] A letter that reflects true pastoral concern. And I don't know about you, but I think I would like to have Peter as my pastor.

I think he would be a most compassionate and understanding pastor. One in whom you could readily confide.

Bring your anxieties and spiritual burdens and discuss them with him. One who would be sympathetic to you. Because of the experiences that he himself passed through during the preparatory years of his life for the calling that the Lord gave him.

And in this immediate context, he makes the contrast between those who stumble and disbelieve. And those who have a corporate identity as the people of God. But you, says Peter, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and so on.

[2 : 41] And the little word, but there, the conjunction that is used, so often significant in the pages of Scripture.

But you, says Peter, there is a definite emphatic emphasis here. It's as if there's a watershed. In contrast to those who stumble.

Those who are in opposition. Those who take offense at Christ. But you, he says to the diaspora. Those who are dispersed.

Those who are dispersed. Those who are dispersed. Those who are dispersed. Are a people who come to a living stone. A people who continue to believe in Christ. And in describing this group, he speaks of them in four ways or by usage of four titles.

In the terms he uses to describe this group. He uses, it is interesting to note, a collective singular of all of them.

[3 : 45] They are a race, a priesthood, a nation, and a people. Terms that describe a large group.

But he wants us to think of them in a category of corporate identity. All descriptive terms are taken from the Old Testament.

And applied in the New Testament sense. It may be that you may think that using Old Testament terminology is irrelevant in the New Testament age.

That is not how Peter reflected on it. And these terms are taken primarily from the book of Exodus.

And also there is a reference to the prophecy of Isaiah.

Exodus chapter 19 primarily. And Isaiah 43. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples.

[4 : 53] For the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel, the people whom I formed for myself, that they might declare my praise.

Now, in the Old Testament, these descriptions relate directly to the physical nation of Israel.

But Peter is applying them in a much wider way. Not to one exclusive nation or peoples, but by way of global international application to those who are the true disciples of Jesus Christ.

And you know, if you compare part of the vision that I spoke about on another visit to you that was granted to the Apostle John in Patmos when he is encouraged to look behind the open door in heaven.

And we are told that in the very throne room of heaven he saw a lamb as a slave. But there is a similarity of language used in speaking of those who are redeemed by the blood of the lamb.

[6 : 19] By your blood, you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you have made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth.

That is a vision of the end times. Speaking of the glorious conclusion of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you can hear the connection in the parallel words. Nation in 1 Peter links with nation in Revelation chapter 5.

People in 1 Peter links with people in Revelation chapter 5. Priesthood in 1 Peter links with priests in Revelation 5.10. And royal in 1 Peter links with kingdom and reign in Revelation 5.10.

In both texts, God has made for himself a royal priesthood. Called a royal priesthood in 1 Peter. In Revelation 5.10 he says, You have made them a kingdom and priest to God and they shall reign on the earth.

[7 : 30] Peter is saying here, this is what Christians are now. And John in his vision is stating, this is what Christians will still be when they pass into glory with the Lamb.

So I'd like just to raise three thoughts from this verse. First of all, their present identity. And he uses four terms to describe the present identity of believers.

Grace could imply a common heritage. You are a chosen race. For the nation of Israel, it meant they were descended from Abraham.

We are the children of Abraham was frequently the proud boast of many of the Jews during the days of Christ's earthly ministry.

But Peter is not writing exclusively to a Jewish community. Or a people of shared race. He is writing to believers who were scattered through abroad and were of different races.

[8 : 46] The chosen race is not black or white or red or yellow or brown. The elect race is a new people from all the peoples, from all the colors and all the cultures who are now aliens and exiles cast out and rejected, but God has taken them in.

What gives them their identity is not their color or their culture or their background, but their chosenness. The fact that they have been chosen by God from all eternity.

They share a common ancestry. Elect, says the writer of this letter, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood.

And you notice how the three persons of the Godhead are involved in the ancestry of this people. There are chosen race.

Out from all the races in the world, you have been chosen. One at a time. Not on the basis of belonging to any group.

[10 : 02] That's why this amazing phrase is individually crucial for every person. You are part of the chosen race because the race is made up of individuals who were chosen from all races.

So your first identity mark is this, that you are chosen. God chose you. Chose you not because of your race, not because of some qualifications that you possessed, because you didn't have any. So this is the first mark of the identity of the believer. You are chosen. Nothing of value in you or in other humans.

You didn't earn it or merit it. You didn't meet any conditions to be chosen. It happened before you were born. And if you ask me why you were chosen, the answer that I can give you is this, because the Lord loved you.

It pleased the Lord to love you. He loved you from all eternity. And that ought to fill us with a sense of awe.

[11 : 12] It ought to fill us with joy that you are a chosen vessel of God. You remember that is how the Lord described Saul of Tarsus.

He described him as a chosen vessel. And that is the description that belongs to every believer.

They are chosen vessels by God. And the second mark is this. You are a royal priesthood. And the point here is, I believe that you have immediate access to God.

You don't need another human priest as mediator. God himself has provided the one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ.

And you have direct access to God through God. You have an exalted, active role in God's presence.

[12:19] You are not chosen, pitied, possessed, blessed and holy just to flitter away your time doing nothing. You are called to minister in the presence of God.

And all your life is to be engaged in priestly service. You are never out of God's presence. You are never in a neutral zone, as it were.

You are always in the court of the temple and your life is either a spiritual service of worship or you are not living in accordance with the character that belongs to you as a royal priesthood.

You remember how Paul writes to the Romans, I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the removal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. So, you are chosen.

[13:29] You are a royal priesthood. The third mark is you are a holy nation. Now, as a nation, you are bound together by the same customs and laws.

That was true of Israel of old at a very physical level with regard to food. and clothing and practices. And it is true of the Israel of God that transcends all cultures and nationalities.

We are bound together as a holy nation, set apart exclusively for God. You exist for God.

And since God is holy, you too are holy. You share His character because He chose you and He pitied you and He possessed you. You are holy and if you do not act in a holy manner, then you are acting out of character.

You are contradicting. Your character as a believer. And the fourth mark is this, you are God's possession. You are a people, He says, for His possession.

[14:39] Verse 10a, once you were not a people but now you are God's people. No, God owns everything. So in one sense, everyone is God's possession by right of creation.

And this therefore must mean a very unique and special relationship. And of course it does. You are His by right of redemption.

Your kinsman, Redeemer, the Boaz of the New Testament has paid the ultimate price for you that you might be His companion and His bride throughout the endless ages of eternity.

Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers not with perishable things such as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

You are God's inheritance. You are the ones He aims to spend eternity with. And when God says through the apostle in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 I will be their God and they shall be my people.

[15:53] They shall be my possession. What He means there is I will dwell in them and walk among them. This then is the identity of those to whom Peter writes.

This is what you are. As a believer this night you are chosen you are a royal priesthood you are a holy nation you are a people for His own possession.

That is your present identity. But then if you ask the question how did you come to have this identity? And the answer that our text gives is this God called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

That brings me to my second point your privileged state. Note the state that you were in when you were called.

You were in darkness. Do you remember how Robert Murray McChain how he spoke of his life at that time?

[16:56] I once he says was a stranger to grace and to God. I knew not my danger and felt not my load. Though friends spoke and rapture of Christ on the tree Jehovah Sidkenu was nothing to me.

I oft read with pleasure to soothe or engage Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page. But in when they pictured the blood sprinkled tree Jehovah Sidkenu was nothing to me.

You were in darkness manipulated dominated by the forces of darkness a slave to sin confusion disorder in your life because these are the companions of darkness. Ignorance of God and enmity with God ignorant of self full of self love impure unclean without God without hope in the world.

As Paul describes it you were dead in the trespasses and sin in which you once walked following the course of the world following the prince of the power of the air the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. [18 : 25] And you may have thought it was a self-satisfying self-fulfilling life but you discovered through the entrance of light that it was an empty way of life as Peter states it was futile how did you come out of this darkness you decided one day that you needed a change you you you you had been for long enough in a dungeon type existence that's not what Peter says Peter says you were chosen in Christ in the eternal realm but you were called in this life you were chosen in love totally unaware of that love until you were called you submitted to the call the authoritative call as you were addressed through the truth you remember how the bible describes it in the call of Abraham the god of glory appeared to father Abraham when he was in

Mesopotamia before he lived in Heron and said go out from your land from your kindred go into the land that I will show you now we don't know how the god of glory appeared to Abraham but what we do know is this that Abraham recognized the divine authority of the voice that addressed him and he recognized that it demanded the response of obedience from him and when god called you whoever that became known to you whether you had a Damascus road revelation or as for the most in in the lives of most an increasingly persistent call god kept knocking at the door of your life and despite the number of times you said no he he came back again like a salesman who refuses to take no for an answer it was an authoritative call ultimately it became an irresistible call you couldn't you couldn't put it off did you literally hear a voice well some might say they did but i would suggest that you didn't but you heard god addressing you through the truth through the scriptures and you obeyed you remember when peter was in prison he was in a dark cell he was awaiting execution he was bound with chains physically in that prison cell just like you and i were bound by chains in the spiritual sense he was in a dark cell awaiting the execution of the sentence of condemnation that had been passed by king herod we too were in a dark cell of unbelief awaiting the execution of the sentencing of the law peter was asleep you and i were asleep in sin insensitive to the power of sin until god intervened and you remember how god intervened in the life of peter the angel came and walked but the whole experience for peter was so incredibly unreal that he thought he was seeing a vision you remember how charles wesley expressed it and can it be long my imprisoned soul lay fast bound in sin and nature's night thine eye diffused a quickening ray i woke the dungeon flamed with light my chains fell off my heart was free i rose went forth and followed thee that's how he describes the lord coming into his life and when peter says that you were called out of darkness i do not believe that he is merely speaking of a change in your surroundings of mine out of darkness into light it is certainly that but it is surely more than that for you were not just merely in darkness but you were darkness that was the condition of man apart from christ darkness was in you so it was not therefore just a change of circumstances or surroundings but a change brought about in you so that you the you of old has been dramatically altered by the power of the holy spirit in enabling you to embrace jesus christ as he is freely offered in the gospel you were called

out of darkness into his marvelous light and then that brings you face to face with the question what is light light and the bible tells us that god is light and it is into his light that you are brought and that in essence means that you have a new perspective on life a new perspective on death a new perspective on yourself because you see yourself in ways that it was impossible for you to see yourself before brought into his marvelous light that light demonstrates to you what you truly are what you were what you are what you will become because the light leaves you under no illusion and you had many illusions about yourself before the light dawned you had countless illusions about your position about the place that you occupied in society but when the light came in it demonstrated to you that you were a helpless sinner held deserving unworthy of the least of god's mercies and so like

McChain when free grace awoke me he says by light from on high then legal fear shook me I trembled to die no refuge no safety in self could I see Jehovah said kid my savior must be my

terrors all vanished before the sweet name my guilty fears banished with boldness I came to drink at the fountain life giving and free Jehovah said kid is all things to me so your present identity your privileged state you were brought into the marvelous light and the purpose of your privileged state and present identity that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light you remember the people of Israel of old when the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion how the psalmist expressed it we were like those who dream our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with shouts of joy then they said among the nations the Lord has done great things for them the Lord has done great things for us we are glad and that is what you are someone for whom the Lord has done great things and basically you are to be a proclaimer not of yourself but of what God has done your present privileged state is not conferred to please self but to serve him that's why we have been given these immense privileges to be immersed in adoration of God not to gain his favor but because adoration is the response of an indebted heart to his amazing grace declare his glory among the nations his marvelous works among all the peoples to declare means basically to speak of all he is and all he has done you are to be a witness for him and in a very real sense you are to be mirrors of [27 : 39] Christ reflecting Christ in your daily conduct in your walk in your conversation in your home in the community and wherever the Lord might take you throughout life now you might say well I feel too weak too helpless to be not but you see the God who has brought you into marvelous light he gives power to the faith and to those who has no might he increases strength you are saved in order that you may proclaim the excellencies of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light and that behoves me and you to let our light shine before man so that they may behold our good works and glorify whom not me not you but glorify your father which is in heaven your present identity your privileged state and your purpose of your privileged state to proclaim him in the world let us pray