

A Chosen Generation

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[0 : 00] 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 9 on.

One of the wonderful things about being a Christian is that never again will you be on the outside. That you belong to God and you belong to one another. And that's a wonderful thing. It's incredibly comforting. Because one of the things that people do not like is isolation and loneliness.

There are times that we want to be alone and there are times we need to be alone. But it's not, as the Lord said, even in a perfect world, it's not good for man to be alone.

We were made for togetherness. We were made for companionship. And we were made for friendship and fellowship. And that's one of the things, the wonderful things that becoming a Christian does for us.

[1 : 23] It brings us into a new community. A community of believers. A community of where you have brothers and sisters in Christ.

And I think it's very important that we need to try and work at that, at getting to know one another better. And this sense of belonging would have been tremendous encouragement to the Christians that Peter wrote to.

Because you've got to remember that Peter wrote, we saw at the beginning, to those who were dispersed. They were scattered all over the place. And sometimes their families were broken up. They were dispossessed of many things. So it was wonderful to have this idea that while they were being pushed all over the place and broken up and dispersed, at the same time, Peter is saying, you belong.

You belong to God and you belong to one another. And that's a great thing to know that even while we live in a world that isn't to and for Christ, a world that can be quite painful and hurtful at times, that there is one who is over all and one who loves you and has given you many who are of the same mind going through this world.

[2 : 40] And I think it's something that believers are aware of at times because the world can change their opinion of you very quickly. Sometimes believers wonder what on earth has happened when a person is converted.

And sometimes people who were friends don't treat you the same. But you know what it tells us in the Bible? That the world loves its own.

And sometimes when a person is converted, sometimes the world don't know how to react. They're not very sure.

Although here's the same person, they're not altogether sure just what has happened. And we need to pray for these people that they will come to see and to understand just what has actually happened.

Now, the thing is that while sometimes we may lose out a little, we gain far more. As the Lord said, we gain a hundredfold. And verse 10 tells us here, once you were not a people, but now you are God's people.

[3 : 50] Isn't that wonderful? Once you were not a people. See, in verse 10, in verse 9, it tells us a people for his own possession. Verse 10 tells us you were not a people, but now you are God's people.

There is one group of people that God has a special place for in this world. And this people, these people are so special to him that God is actually working everything.

Now, this may not seem to be true, but it is true. It may not seem today to be, maybe in your own experience you can't make sense of it, but God is actually working everything for your good.

Sometimes a Christian will be going through a period in his life or her life, and they will be saying, how can this possibly be true?

How can God be working everything together for my good? Because right now, what's happening to me, I would not say is good.

[5 : 03] It is painful. It is confusing. My heart is sore and breaking. How can this be for my good? But what we've always got to remember is that we're only seeing right now.

We're only seeing at this particular point. And we've always got to remember that God has a much bigger picture. God sees the end from the beginning. He sees everything.

And God is putting everything together like a jigsaw. And there are little parts. And you have your part to play in this jigsaw. And your own life is a jigsaw.

And God is putting it all together. And sometimes to you it's all mixed up. But be personal. This is where faith has to come into it. And faith has to see.

Lord, even though I don't know, even though I cannot understand, give me the faith to believe that what you say is true, that all things are working together.

[6 : 06] And this is what God is doing for his people, for all his people. His people are precious. His church he is building. In fact, he says, his people, it's an amazing thing, are his portion in this world.

His inheritance. He's got nothing else in this world that belongs to him. Well, I shouldn't say belongs to him. There is, the earth belongs unto the Lord and all that it contains, Sam tells us.

But out of this world are his people. And they are special. They alone are his inheritance. They are the ones he's going to take out of this world to be with himself.

So it's a wonderful thing. And we need to think about that. And we need to reflect upon that. And that's why the Apostle says, 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. And so we've seen already, as we're looking here, the descriptions that Peter has given to the Christian.

[7 : 18] We saw that they were newborn infants. We saw them as living stones. And now he says, but you are a chosen race. And straight away we see planning. We see formation.

We see the bringing together. And when it says a chosen race, and you see there, it says a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.

Straight away you see this is God's doing. Chosen. And again, people have a huge problem with this. And they say, well, what can I, is this his word election?

Well, to a certain extent it is. And it's not something that if I was going to preach an evangelistic service, for instance, that I would hammer home election.

Because, you see, at the end of the day, we are not in the position to either elect or un-elect ourselves. That's God's domain. That's God's work. But what he has told us to do, and this is where it takes away, where it puts, I should say, upon ourselves the responsibility.

[8 : 34] You know, God only says one thing to us about election. He says, make your calling and your election sure. You make it sure. That's the only thing he says to us about it.

So what does that mean? It puts a responsibility upon us to seek the Lord. And then he says in his word, seek and you will find. So we can never turn around at the end of the day and say, oh, well, Lord, I didn't know whether I was elect or not, so I didn't bother seeking you.

Well, the Lord will say, well, I'm sorry, that's not how it works. So we are to make it sure. And the only way we can make it sure is by seeking the Lord, by attending upon his word, by seeking him with all our heart.

And if we do, we will find him. So this is why it is so important. But this word where we see we're chosen, it shows how God has purposed to do a great work.

And, you know, it's one of the things I just marvel at. I can't get over. It's how God has given us. He's given his people to his son.

[9 : 47] He chose us as a gift. The Father has given all his people to his son.

And Jesus, in turn, has died for all his people. I find that one of the most humbling, awesome things. It's very hard to get your mind around it.

How God set his love upon us from all eternity. And he said, my son, I am giving you these people. And so this is a wonderful thing.

So we're a chosen race. And we're chosen. And we are called because we're chosen. Now, there are what we would term two calls in the gospel.

There's an outward call. Today there's an outward call. When I preach or anybody preaches and calls people, you call people to come to receive Jesus Christ.

[10 : 48] That is the call of the gospel. Wherever the gospel is preached, there is a call going out. But then that's what we would term a general call.

In other words, everybody who hears, in fact, anybody who comes into church, supposing it's into a funeral, and they've never been in church before, and the Bible is read, and supposing we read, say, for instance, from John chapter 6 about where Jesus says about the bread of life and so on. And that goes on to say, him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. You're reading that. The call of the gospel has gone out. And so everybody who is in the presence of that, that's what we term the general call of the gospel.

But then there is what we would term the inward call, where the Spirit of God is through that call, through the outward call, is working in the heart, drawing.

And you may say to yourself, well, you know, I've heard that outward call loads of times, but I've never experienced an inward call.

[12 : 02] I've never felt personally myself drawn. And it's here, my friend, that you've got to start. And you say to yourself, right, this is what you've got to do.

You have to ask the Lord and say, Lord, and if you're serious about your salvation, this is what you must do. And you must say to the Lord, Lord, help me to hear in order that I may believe.

Will you pray that? Because if you will, you know, the Lord will answer you. The Lord will answer. If you are genuinely sincere in your prayer and saying, Lord, I want to become a Christian, help me to hear.

Help me to hear your word in such a way that I today will believe. That's the kind of prayer the Lord will answer. And he will enable you.

He will call you in such a way because he has promised those who, that is seeking the Lord, that is truly seeking, but maybe there's somebody here saying, I don't know that I can actually pray that because I'm afraid.

[13 : 15] I'm afraid of becoming a Christian. You know, some people are like that. Some people are afraid of becoming Christian. They would like, they would like to get it sorted before they leave this world.

They want to become a Christian before they leave this world because they do not want to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, having not received him. But, they're afraid of becoming Christians.

Well, my dear friend, again ask the Lord to take you over that fear so that you will go to the Lord and say, Lord, and you've got to be honest because the Lord knows your heart.

He knows exactly how you feel. And say to him, Lord, I have problems and I'm afraid, deep down, I'm afraid of, I'm afraid of what will be. I'm afraid of my family, in school, I'm afraid of work, I'm afraid of loads of things.

But I do need to become a Christian. Help me, Lord, to come over these fears. Take me over these fears and help me to hear that inward call so that I will hear the Lord call to me and give me the faith to believe.

[14 : 22] That's our responsibility. And the Lord will answer that prayer of yours if you ask that sincerely.

And so that inward call enables us to believe, to rest in Christ as Savior. So we're brought out of darkness, as it says here, into his marvelous light.

It's a wonderful thing, out of that darkness, into his marvelous light. It's not that we, as it were, walked out of darkness, into the light. It's more that the light just broke in upon us.

Then we see what a chosen race, a royal priesthood. Now again, as we know, nobody in the Old Testament could just become a priest.

The priests became priests, only those from the tribe of Levi. And every priest in Levi had to be consecrated to the Lord. Now as we know, in the Old Testament, priesthood has been done away with as a whole way of worship.

[15 : 30] There's no need now for an altar and the incense and the Holy of Holies and all these things. These were all shadows and types pointing to Jesus Christ.

But we're told in the New Testament that we are priests. We're told that in various places, that we are now priests. Indeed, we're told we're priests and kings.

And just as the priest was consecrated and washed and anointed, so are we. So we've got to ask ourselves, in what way do we live as priests?

Well, what was the function of the priest? Well, the function of the priest was to sacrifice. So you say to yourself, sacrifice? So how do we sacrifice?

How can we be sacrificing priests? Well, again, the New Testament tells us very simply there are various things. For instance, present your bodies a living sacrifice.

[16:30] What does the Lord mean? He means very simply that we are to give ourselves entirely to the Lord. That's what it means. To give ourselves entirely to the Lord.

Now, remember, a sacrifice always costs. It's not a sacrifice if it doesn't cost. There's always a cost involved in a sacrifice.

And of course, the greatest sacrifice of all, the most costly ever, was the sacrifice of Jesus. And to a certain extent, it costs in sacrificing ourselves to the Lord.

But that's exactly what the Lord means when he says, take up your cross, deny yourselves, and follow me. Because sometimes it will take us into places and bring us into situations that are difficult.

But that's part of what it means in following the Lord. Again, we're told to offer the sacrifice of praise continually. That's another of the sacrifices.

[17:38] Every day, praise should be part and partial of our life. We're commanded to declare the praises of him who has brought us out of darkness into that wonderful light.

We're also told to sacrifice good works, but to do good, that's what we're told in Hebrews, to do good and communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

So you see, our whole life as it is lived to the Lord is being lived by way of sacrifice. We mustn't lose sight of that. Our life is to be lived to and for the Lord.

And then it tells us that we're also a holy nation. This is where the Lord has set us apart for his own glory. What is a nation? Well, it's a place with a central government, with a ruler.

It's got laws and people are governed by these laws and live in submission to these laws. That's exactly what has happened. The kingdom of God has become the rule for our lives.

[18:50] The ruler is King Jesus and we live in obedience to the law. We live in obedience because we love. And then we see a people belonging to God.

Again, we mentioned that earlier on that we are his possession in this world. But then we're told in verse 11, again, another description, beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh and so on.

You see, we're living as sojourners and exiles, people who are just passing through, people who are living in a different place. And that is why sometimes, if you go to a different country, one of the things that strikes you is there are many differences.

There are often similarities, but there are differences. For instance, people might be driving on the wrong side of the road, well, it's the right side of the road to them, but it's the wrong side of the road as far as we're concerned. And sometimes, even crossing the road, we get a wee bit confused because we have to, we always have to work in the opposite.

Our thinking has to change. We see different ways of operating and there's maybe different currency, there's different this and different that. And we're aware that we're living in a different place.

[20:15] And that's how it is for the Christian. We live here, but we don't really belong here. Our king, our citizenship, as we're told, we are actually, we belong to another kingdom.

This kingdom, God's kingdom, is in this world, but it doesn't belong here. It's a temporary kingdom as long as his people remain in this world. And that brings its own problems because sometimes life will be challenging.

And there will often be things happening in life that we don't feel comfortable with. And God will make sure that you don't feel comfortable with everything that goes on in this world. There are sadly times we become comfortable.

And it's like we take out the easy chair and we pull ourselves into the fire and we feel comfortable and we say to ourselves, this is good. And sometimes that can happen to the Christian.

Spiritually as well. That they become cozy in the world. And everything is going on well. And maybe they're prospering temporarily. Where everything is working out really well.

[21:25] Maybe your health is good. And everything in your family is good. And that your work is good. And everything is going so well. And that can be not necessarily, but sometimes it can be a dangerous time.

Because sometimes we can become complacent. But we mustn't say that that is always going to be the case. Because sometimes the most vibrant Christians are people who are enjoying great prosperity at every level.

So we mustn't think for one moment that if we have prosperity at every level, then we lose our spirituality. But we've always got to guard because there is a great danger.

And the Bible warns us against that. That we don't shift our emphasis and begin to think that somehow we're achieving this and that it's because of who we are.

We've always got to be on guard against these things. But the Lord, if He sees us becoming too cozy in this world, He will remind us one way or another.

[22 : 29] You're a stranger here. You're just passing through. This world is not your home. Something will happen that will shake you, shake your complacency.

You'll get a little glimpse of eternity. You'll get a little glimpse of how fragile this world is. You will be brought, the Lord will shake you in such a way that you will see the most important thing for your life is to be right with God.

And that the most important thing in God's sight for you is that you will become more like a son. And God will see to it. So that if you take your eye off Him and you take the foot off the pedal and you begin to relax, the Lord won't leave you like that.

But we also see the importance as we live out this world, in this world that challenges, in this world that often opposes, in this world that is difficult, that we have to live as consistent Christians.

Because it tells us in verse 12, 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.

[23 : 49] In other words, we've got to keep going, living faithfully and diligently and in a Christ-like manner God. Until the world will eventually be forced to see and to recognize.

Sometimes they don't want to, sometimes they're very reluctant to see it. Jesus Himself, I suppose, is a prime example. They spoke, see what they were saying about Jesus?

They said He was a drunkard. They said He was a glutton. They said He performed His miracles by the powers of the devil. Is that extraordinary? extraordinary. Everything that Jesus wasn't.

Just because Jesus, He went to the feasts, He obviously ate with people and He drank with people and He socialized with people but always He was doing so.

And we've got to remember that everything that Jesus did, He did according to the will of the Father. He never went with His Father, didn't will Him. He never did what His Father, didn't will Him. but He was always mixing.

[24 : 58] And people, people being people, picked up on it and said, look. And they exaggerate the whole thing and they say He's a glutton. He's a drunkard. And they were telling people, and you know, it's an awful thing.

The rumor was being spread about Jesus. See these miracles that He's doing. It's not by God, it's by the power of darkness. So we needn't be surprised if people say or spread untruths about us. And it's difficult. It's hard. But we've always got to remember that this has always been the way. And we've always got to keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus.

And we've got to remember this world is not our home. That's how the patriarchs lived. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, these men, they had their troubles in this world, but always they were remembering, I were only here for a wee while.

We've been prepared for an eternal city. But we've got to continue living honorably. And we've got to remember that the Lord, the Lord is a judge of all the earth.

[26 : 10] We find that often in the Bible. And the Lord in His own way and in His own time will deal with these things. He will. And He will show Himself as being the God of truth and the God of judgment and the God of justice.

But then it goes on, Peter says, I urge you as exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

And we've got to remember we're in a battle every single day. And this where it says to wage war, this has the idea of a prolonged military campaign.

It's not just a wee battle here and there. It's a prolonged military campaign. And that's what's happening to us spiritually. It's a prolonged spiritual military campaign.

We're in a battle long term. You know, sometimes when a young Christian is converted and they're aware of struggles and battles and they think, oh, this is only for now.

[27 : 20] It's going to get a lot easier. As I become mature and as I develop, I will become such a conquering Christian and all these things will fade away.

No, my friend, this battle is forever in this world. It's an ongoing battle. And the biggest problem, you know who will cause you more problem in this world than probably anybody else is yourself.

D.L. Moody said that, you know, he said, I've had more problems with myself than with anybody else ever in this world. And I think we can all give a ramen to that. The person who lets you down most is yourself.

The person who fails you most is yourself. The person who disappoints you most is yourself. The person you struggle with most is yourself. Well, if you're like me, that's how it will be.

And I'm sure we'll all recognize that. And that's why we've got to realize this is a battle. And we've got to war against it. Because if we do, then the Lord will not only just give us a victory, but he will bring us on to become, it's as we see in verse, keep your conduct.

[28 : 34] And I believe that's tied into verse 11. Keeping your conduct amongst the Gentiles honorably. Because it's going to be a powerful witness to them. Time is gone.

Just we'll see very, very, very quickly what it says here. Verse 16. Live as people who are free. Not using your freedom as a cover up for evil, but living as servants of God.

My friend, here's another description. We are also servants of God. God. Some people think that when a person becomes a Christian, that their life becomes shackled and bound.

Well, Christians can sometimes make their life shackled and bound. We can be bound by one another. But you know, there is a liberty and a freedom in Christ.

And Christ wants us to enjoy that liberty and freedom. we can bind ourselves up. But if we look to Jesus and follow him, we will not be bound.

[29 : 39] And you know, one of the greatest ways of living in freedom is by service. Now, you wouldn't think that. Naturally, you wouldn't think it. But it's true. The freest Christians are those who have handed themselves over entirely to the Lord and are used in his service.

Paul, when you look at Paul's life, in many ways, you would say Paul's life, Paul spent a lot of his life in prison. Paul had a tough life.

But you know, he always talked about his freedom. The freedom that he enjoyed. He had such a sense of being free. And as he looked back at his old life, when he thought he was free, he realized then that he was living in slavery, in bondage and in chains.

And it's worth listening to this man. who had seen life in all its different dimensions and colors. And he was able to say, I wouldn't trade any other life for the life that I have in Christ.

In fact, the old life that people thought was wonderful, he just looked in it as refuse, rubbish to be discarded. The life in Christ was a life of liberty and freedom.

[30 : 52] My dear friends, I hope that all of us will come to know that. That we would live with this sense of service, sense of obedience, that we might be aware of living in this world, a world that never liked Christ, but a world of opportunity to bring Christ to people.

And you know, at the end of the day, that's the greatest work that anybody can do. There's a beautiful picture given in Daniel of those who lead people to Jesus, that they will shine like the stars forever.

Isn't that a beautiful description? That is what it's about, is service. And all God's people are involved in service.

And you know, it's a very interesting thing when you hear people talk about how they came to faith in Jesus Christ. There are often loads of factors along the way.

This person said this, and that person said that, and somebody gave a tape when there was somebody praying, and there was the influence of this person, and there was that service here, and there was, and it's, there are so many factors brought into it, and the Lord is taking note of all these things.

[32 : 14] That's part of the ongoing service. We're all part of it. My friends, this is life. This is the way to live, and this is where true liberty is found.

Let us pray. O Lord, O God, we ask Thee to bless us, and that we may heed what the Word of God is saying to us.

May we be strengthened by it, challenged by it, encouraged by it, and may we go forward looking unto Jesus, believing in Him, and trusting in Him.
Take us all home, in safety we pray. Part us with Thy blessing, and do us good. In Jesus' name we ask all. Amen.