

Lesson Text: 1 Peter 2:1-10
Lesson Title: A Chosen People

Introduction

Part of Peter's purpose in writing to the scattered believers was to encourage them to live for Christ in the midst of persecution. In our lesson text today, Peter draws from his Old Testament knowledge of the building of the Temple and how God chose Israel to be His chosen people (Deuteronomy 10:10-15). Building a structure like the Temple was no small task in biblical times. It took much planning, preparation and hard work. Materials had to be carefully selected and placed at the proper locations in the structure to assure beauty, strength, and durability. Building a spiritual house requires spiritual resources that can only be found in Jesus Christ.

Have you ever considered yourself a spiritual temple? The New Testament sometimes pictures the church as a "spiritual house," a building put together for God's glory (Ephesians 2:21-22). With that thought in mind, we should remember that Peter's letter began by identifying his recipients as "strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1). Scattered believers seem like poor materials with which to start building a house. And according to verse 1 of our lesson text, the spiritual material was "scattered." Nevertheless, those saved by grace are God's "elect." That would encourage Peter's readers to focus on their relationship to heaven and not what was happening on earth. God has chosen people out of all the world to belong to Him, and the church is that people (John 15:16). Being a chosen people means just that, "chosen."

Verse 1

"Wherefore" (1 Peter 2:1) refers back to Peter's comments on the "word of the Lord" (1 Peter 1:24-25). God's word is life and therefore it continually works in the heart of the believer to produce spiritual growth. Part of growing spiritually and being a chosen people is *eliminating* or "laying aside" attitudes and actions inconsistent with being a child of God. "Laying aside" meant "to strip away soiled garments" (Colossians 3:8-9; James 1:21). The word "all" precedes each of the five sins Peter lists that should be put away. First, Peter exhorts the believers to lay aside "malice." "Malice" refers to general wickedness within or the desire to harm someone. Believers should never harbor ill-will against their brothers and sisters in Christ. Second, "guile" refers to dishonesty and deceit. Peter may have been thinking about Ananais and Sapphira when he listed this sin (Acts 5:4-5). Third, "hypocrisies" refers to those who play a part, people who aren't real or genuine. God's chosen people should not be role playing or play acting. Fourth, "envies" describe those who constantly look at the success of others and desire to have what others possess. Fifth, "evil speakings" comes from the Greek word which means "to run down another person" and refers to destructive criticism. This sin can be committed against individuals, families, groups or churches.

Verse 2-3

Part of growing spiritually and being a chosen people involves *desiring* (1 Peter 2:2). God gives those who are truly saved a desire for the word of God. Anyone who claims New Testament

Christianity and does not desire the word of God is a biblical contradiction. The life of “newborn babes” depends upon nourishment from the mother’s “milk.” “Milk” is pre-digested food. Peter says believers are dependent upon the “sincere” or “unadulterated, pure, unmixed” word of God (Psalm 119:97, 103, 159, 167). The results of biblical hunger is spiritual growth. “That ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2) literally means the word of God will grow you!

Then Peter adds, “If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:3). If you have discovered that the Lord Jesus is the only One who can satisfy His children spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, physically, and vocationally, then you are going to stay in His Word. The Psalmist said, “*O taste and see that the LORD is good...*” (Psalm 34:38). What a difference it would make if every congregation came together in unity with a God-given desire to be filled with spiritual milk!

Verse 4-5

Peter is writing to believing Jews who were scattered abroad because of persecution, and he reminds them that they were just as chosen and just as much a spiritual building as they were when they were literally together in a building of worship. “To whom coming...” (1 Peter 2:4) stresses the significance of God’s chosen people *coming* to Christ. “Whom” refers to Christ. To speak of salvation as “coming” to Christ is an accurate statement (Matthew 11:28). Coming to Christ conveys more than your *initial* coming. It also indicates a *continual* coming. In the Old Testament this word was used of those who drew near to God for ongoing worship. Peter uses “coming” to stress the idea of a focal point. The focal point of God’s chosen people is Jesus Christ!

Jesus Christ is the focal point because He is “a living stone” (1 Peter 2:4). He is the One from whom we derive our life. Peter probably had the Jewish leaders and most Jewish people in mind when he referred to Jesus as “disallowed indeed of men” (1 Peter 2:4). Most Jewish people, especially their religious leaders, rejected the Son of God because of their spiritual blindness. Although they rejected Christ, He was “chosen of God, and precious” (1 Peter 2:4). They threw away the first “living stone” but God set Him as the cornerstone of the church (Ephesians 2:20).

“Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house...” (1 Peter 2:5), says exactly what Peter intended. “Ye also” means that Christians are so closely identified and united with Christ that the very life that exists in Christ exists in them also (Galatians 2:20). Christ is the chief Cornerstone, and in Him we all fit and come together. Here there are no race or class distinctions: we are all leveled to the same position of worship. “If the metaphor of a house of living stones seems ‘violent’ (Vincent), it should be remembered that Jesus employed the figure of a house of believers (Matthew 16:18)” (A. T. Robertson).

Peter’s reference to believers becoming “an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5) is highly significant. One of the greatest privileges as a child of God is having access to God through Jesus Christ. Think of how many lost people in the world have no access to God. Peter is saying that believers are to come together as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” In the Old Testament, God’s temple represented His presence. Today,

believers are the “church of the living God” (1 Timothy 3:15). Believers also function as “priests” in the sense that every believer can minister to other believers in the family of God. Praying and interceding was one of the most important duties of a priest and every believer can now intercede for others. The priesthood is no longer confined to one tribe or one family. All in the family of God make up the “holy priesthood.”

In his commentary on First Peter 2, Dr. John MacArthur lists six characteristics of the Old Testament priest that relates to believers today being a holy priesthood. First, Old Testament priest were *chosen* by God (Exodus 28). God chose Aaron and his sons for the Old Testament priesthood even though they were sinners and imperfect. Likewise, Christ chooses and saves sinners today who are imperfect (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). Second, the Old Testament priests had to be *cleansed* (Leviticus 8:6-36). Not one man from the tribe of Levi or Aaron’s family could enter the priesthood unless God washed them clean. In the same manner, “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour...*” (Titus 3:5-6). Believers must be clean to function as “an holy priesthood.” Third, God *clothed* the Old Testament priests in special garments for ministry (Exodus 28). The linen breeches and other garments symbolized purity and righteousness. Today, believers are “clothed in righteousness” (Romans 4:5, 11, 22). Fourth, Old Testament priests were *anointed* (Leviticus 8:30). This was symbolic of God’s power for service. The apostle John told his readers “*But ye have an unction from the Holy One*” (1 John 2:20). Fifth, Old Testament priests were *spiritually prepared* by spending time with God. Leviticus 8:33 says, “*And ye shall not go out of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation in seven days, until the days of your consecration be at an end: for seven days shall he consecrate you.*” The Apostle Paul says that he himself was spiritually prepared in Galatians 1:15-17 when he said, “*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood...*” Sixth, *obedience* was a characteristic of the Old Testament priest. Leviticus 10:1-3 is a sad illustration of what happens when priests disobeyed in the Old Testament. Peter admonished his readers of the importance of obedience in 1 Peter 1:14.

Verse 6-8

Quoting from Isaiah 28:16, Peter *emphasizes* that Jesus Christ was foreordained by God to be the “chief corner stone” (1 Peter 2:6). The “chief corner stone” refers to the stone that determined all the angles and placements for the rest of the stones laid to build the temple. Peter’s readers knew the “corner stone” was the most important stone in any building. Christ the “chief corner stone” was “elect” which meant He was divinely chosen by God. He was also “precious” which means He was “irreplaceable.” And for everyone who “believeth on him,” he “shall not be confounded” (1 Peter 2:6) or “disappointed.” Those who trust Christ as Savior and believe in Him will never be without hope and will never be let down.

Christ is not “precious” to everyone but He is to those “which believe” (1 Peter 2:7). “But unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner” (1 Peter 2:7). Peter said that the Jews were the “builders” who “disallowed” or rejected Christ. He did not fit into their plan or preconceived idea of what the Messiah should be.

Instead of being their Savior, Christ became “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense...” (1 Peter 2:8). He was something they tripped over that ultimately destroyed them. The Savior they rejected ultimately brought judgment upon them (Luke 20:17-18).

Note: How do people stumble over Christ? People stumble over Christ because they willfully and deliberately refuse to obey the truth about Him. This means more than passive disbelief. The text suggests those who examine Him and then reject Him. God has sovereignly ordained that those who disbelieve Christ will “stumble.” It is no accident that lives are broken apart when Christ is rejected. God rejects those who refuse to believe in His Son.

Verse 9-10

Peter begins to *describe* believers as a chosen people by using a strong contrasting word, “but” (1 Peter 2:9). Believers are the exact opposite of those who reject Christ. First, believers are “a chosen generation.” Just as God had chosen Israel for a special purpose, He has also chosen those who are saved today for a special purpose (Ephesians 1:3-5). Second, believers are “a royal priesthood.” The “spiritual house” Peter mentioned in verse 5 has now become a “royal house.” It carries the idea of uniqueness and speciality. Believers today walk with the Lord and serve the Lord. But one day soon we will reign with Him. Both now and in the future our relationship with Christ is both kingly and priestly. Third, “an holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9) means believers are a “separate people.” Israel forfeited their uniqueness as a holy people when they sinned and became like all other nations (Deuteronomy 4:27; 28:64). By our standing in Christ, believers are sanctified because of Christ’s imputed righteousness. Practically, we must progress each day in living holy and separated lives. Fourth, believers are a “peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9). Literally, we are a people for God’s own possession. Christ will not share His church with any other!

Why were we chosen by God? For what purpose did Christ save us and make us different? The answer is “that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light...” (1 Peter 2:9). The “darkness” from which we have been “called out of” was the spiritual darkness of sin. Believers now live in “his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). We were “in time past not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but how have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:10). Those who are now saved were at one time not a people. We had no identity or purpose. Things are different now because of “mercy.” “Mercy” is synonymous with God’s love and compassion. It speaks of God’s sympathy with the misery of a sinner. “Were not” and “had not” are set in contrast to “but are now” and “but now.” That’s what it means to be a chosen people!

Conclusion

Believers trust and worship Christ as the “Cornerstone” or essential being of our lives. He is the Solid Rock on which we build our lives. We have been graciously chosen to be a part of His spiritual house. Unbelievers see Christ as someone who may help them achieve their goals or stabilize them in difficult times. He is just one “stone” in the building. They fail to understand His worth or hear His word. They willfully reject Him.

Do we live like we are chosen? Do we treat our fellow believers as kings and priests? Are we Christ's obedient servants? "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious..." (1 Peter 2:7). Is He precious to you?

Amen.