*Chosen*

1 Peter 2:9-10

1/15/23

 Having been away from 1 Peter for several weeks, it would be wise to begin with a brief review. 1 Peter is a regional letter sent to believers living in modern-day Turkey who were suffering because of their faith. Peter’s purpose was to encourage and instruct them on how to live in their challenging context. His message can be summed up in the title *elect exiles*. Christians are chosen by God to be His people and enjoy the benefits of His salvation. Yet this makes us exiles in a world that is not our home. This exile creates a sense of alienation and opposition from the world while we enjoy fellowship and favor with God.

 Peter’s message is designed to encourage his readers in the gospel and inform the practice of their faith. The letter opens by focusing on the gospel, saying God caused us to be born again to a living hope through faith in Jesus Christ. Then from 1:13-2:12 Peter gives general instruction on how to live as aliens and sojourners in the world. Starting in 2:13, Peter applies these principles to specific circumstances and relationships. Through it all, he holds Christ forward as the object of our faith and love by reminding us of who He is, what He has done, and who we are in Him.

 We ended our study in 2:4-8, where Jesus is described as the precious cornerstone laid in Zion for our salvation. People respond to Him in either rejection or belief. Vs. 8 ended by telling us that all who are disobedient to God’s word are appointed for eternal doom. Vs. 9 opens with the contrasting word *but,* indicating that the outcome is quite different for God’s people. They are a favored by God. This is a medicine the Bible often prescribes to suffering saints. When we suffer at the hands of the world, we can take comfort in the truth that God’s favor rests on us.

Vs. 9 describes that favor through four titles that describe who we are in Christ. In many translations, these titles are in small caps, indicating that Peter is quoting the OT. He does not quote a single verse; rather, he lifts four descriptors God uses of Israel from the OT and applies them to the church. Some take this to indicate that the church has replaced Israel or, as one commentator I read this week said, has become the *true Israel of God.* Just because Peter borrows terms from the OT to describe the church does not mean that God has abandoned His plans for Israel. God made an unconditional covenant with Abraham and his descendants after him, that He will keep. So, whatever this verse means, it cannot mean that the church has replaced Israel.

 Peter’s point is not to speak to the relationship between the church and Israel. He wants us to understand our lofty position in Christ. First, we are called a *chosen race.* Humanity has alienated themselves from God through sin. All people are self-condemned through willful rebellion against God. Yet God in His mercy, chose to redeem a people out of the lost mass of humanity. This chosen race is not determined along ethnic lines, but according to the kind intentions of God’s will Eph. 1:5 tells us. Entrance into this race comes through a second birth worked in us by the Spirit of God as we come to Christ for salvation.

 Not only are we a chosen race, but we are also a royal priesthood. God’s people are true nobility. Our world is obsessed with power, possessions, and influence. Yet God says that the true nobility are those whose hope is in the Lord. We are told in 1 Cor. 1:26ff:

*for consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak thing of the world to shame the things that are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us the wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.*

So our royalty is not rooted in who we are and what we have to offer God; it is received from God because of who Christ is and what He has done as our substitute.

 The royalty mentioned here is used descriptively. We are a royal *priesthood*, which picks up the theme in vs. 5 that says believers are a holy priesthood who offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Our royalty is received for the purpose of serving God. We do this by engaging in worship and proclaiming His salvation to our fellow man.

 Third, we are described as a holy nation. Again, this does not speak to a group linked by common ancestry. The church is a spiritual people whose citizenship is in heaven. Entrance into this nation comes, not by physical birth or a human act, but by faith in Christ. John 1:13 tells us that God’s people are born *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* When we studied Colossians 1:13, we talked about how God has *delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.* This speaks to the transfer of our citizenship into Christ’s kingdom.

 This nation is *holy*. God’s people are set apart from the world for the purposes of God. They have been consecrated by God, cleansed from sin, and commissioned to live holy lives as a testimony to His holiness. This is the reason for Peter’s emphasis on behavior in this letter. He has already told us: *as obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your behavior; because it is written, “You shall be holy for I am holy.”* We are a holy nation because God has made us so. It becomes us to demonstrate His holiness in all our actions.

 Finally, we are described as a people for God’s own possession, reminding us that our lives are not our own. Our culture that is obsessed with personal autonomy and chaffs at the notion that someone outside of us has a rightful claim upon us. But the Bible says that prior to salvation, we are slaves of sin and captured by Satan, bound to do his will. Christ, through the shedding of His blood, paid the ransom price of our redemption. He entered the slave market of sin and purchased with His blood a people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. These people have become His possession. Romans 6:22 tells us that, having been freed from sin, we become slaves of righteousness. Titus 2:14 tells us that Christ *gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.* God’s people are not free to do whatever they want. Rather, we *have been bought with a price* (the blood of Jesus); *therefore, glorify God in your body!*

 All four of these titles point to the vaulted position we have in Christ. These truths should humble us, for we know that we are saved, not because of anything good within ourselves, but because of the kindness of God who brought His grace to us when we wanted nothing to do with Him. They should also be a source of comfort and encouragement. Although we are despised, rejected, and even opposed by the world, God’s favor rests on us unbroken from eternity past into eternity future.

 In the back half of vs. 9, we see why God chose us to be a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for His own possession. He has done this *so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* This speaks to what we do because of our lofty position in Christ.

Why does the bible put so much emphasis on our inability and aversion to coming to God? Why does it say things like *no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him*? Why does it tell us that salvation is not according to our birth, the will of our flesh (meaning something we earn), or the will of man (something we instigate)? It does this so that we understand that it is *by His doing that you are in Christ Jesus* (1 Cor. 1:30)*.* The bible does not want the redeemed to say *look at what I have done. I have discovered and chosen for myself the way of salvation.* The bible wants our response to be *look at what God has done! When I was His enemy, openly rebelling against Him, He loved us. When I did not want Him, He pursued me. I corrupted myself, yet He sent His Son to pay the penalty of my sin in my place. When I ran for the darkness of my sin, He pursued me by His Spirit. He removed the blinders of sin from my eyes, showing me the glory of Christ the Savior. His grace awoke faith within me and granted me the gift of repentance.* Yes, salvation is all of God’s grace*.* That is why 1 Cor. 1 ends by saying *let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.*

 God chose us so that we would proclaim His excellencies for doing it. We proclaim the wonder of His character and the excellencies of His deeds. No other god is so good, so sovereign, so wise, so loving. No other god is perfect in all his ways or worthy of all praise. Every god in every religion except Christianity accepts people based upon the merits of their actions. But not the God of the Bible. He alone accepts people as a pure act of grace. No other god could conceive of the plan of salvation or has the power of carry it out, because every other god is an imitation of man rather than a god. Only God does these things. It behooves us to proclaim His excellencies.

 We proclaim His excellencies because He called us out of the darkness of sin into His marvelous light. Jesus is that light, reminding us that the glory of God is that He wants a relationship with us. Through Christ, we are reconciled to God, purchased for His purposes, and made members of His kingdom. We, as a royal priesthood, *proclaim His excellencies*. We proclaim them to one another, stirring one another up to praise. We proclaim them in worship to God, rejoicing in the supreme excellency that He is. And we proclaim them to those still trapped in the darkness of sin, calling them to come to the light that they too might experience the excellencies of the God who promises to save all who trust in Christ.

 Beloved, we exist to enjoy God for the greatness of who He is and to glorify Him in all that we do. That is what Peter is trying to capture here in this phrase. When we are captured by the wonder and glory of God, His praises will be on our lips. Obedience will follow, not because we fear His judgment, but because we delight in His beauty and want to reflect it. Our tongues will be loosed in evangelism because we have found Christ to be our all in all, and we want everyone else to know the greatness of who He is and what He has done. We want to see the whole earth full of His praises because that is what He deserves. O beloved, do you see in Christ all the excellencies of God? Are you enamored with Christ with the kind of adoration Solomon expresses towards his beloved in the Song of Solomon? God is good, and His ways are altogether right. Once we have tasted of His kindness, we will long for deeper experiences of His excellencies and will want to make those excellencies known to all. God called us to Himself so that 1) we might know His excellencies and 2) proclaim them to all who will listen.

 Finally, vs. 10 mentions two things we have received from Christ. The first is citizenship. We proclaim the excellencies of Christ because *we once were not a people, but now we are the people of God.* The second is mercy. *You had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* Mercy is when you do not give someone something they deserve. We deserve God’s wrath. Before salvation His righteous frown was over us, and eternal doom was our appointed portion because of our disobedience to His word. Yet in His mercy, God gave the punishment we deserve to His Son so that we could become objects of His mercy. Rightly do we sing in the hymn *At Calvary: O the love that drew salvation’s plan! O the grace that brought it down to man! O the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary! Mercy there was great and grace was free; pardon there was multiplied to me; there my burdened soul found liberty at Calvary.*

 In vs. 10, Peter is quoting from Hosea 1:20 and 2:23. God told Hosea to marry the prostitute Gomer. They had several children together whose names spoke of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God and God’s coming judgment for it. Then Gomer left her husband to return to her prostitution. Yet God told Hosea to purchase her from her harlotry and to restore her as his wife. This woman who did not deserve mercy received mercy from her jilted husband. God used Hosea to illustrate how He acts toward us. We were not His people and did not want to be. Yet He graciously intervened in our lives, making us objects of His mercy through the salvation provided by His Son. He went into the prostitution house of our sin to purchase us for Himself. He led us out of the brothel of this world into His glorious kingdom, so that we might know the excellencies of Him who called us. What kind of a God would do this? Only our God. He grants citizenship to all who come to the fountain of Christ for life, and He gives mercy to those who know they do not deserve it.

 My hope today as been that we would catch a glimpse of the excellencies of God. I know there are people here who are just like Gomer, who turned her back on God to pursue the sinful pleasures of this world. Do not flee the light of God for the darkness of your sin. Come to Christ. Taste of His kindness and look upon His beauty. He bore your sin in His body on Calvary so that you could be reconciled to God. I plead with you, turn to Christ. His love is all encompassing and all-satisfying. Come, find freedom, joy, and abundance of life in a relationship with Him. Flee the coming wrath of God by running into the outstretched arms of Christ. He died to set you free. Those whom the Son sets free, are free indeed!

 And to those who have already come to Christ for salvation, may we have eyes only for our beloved. May He be our all-consuming passion. Cultivate a deep love for Him. Admire the beauty of His character, the glory of His ways, the excellencies of His nature. May we proclaim His excellencies in our actions, in our praises, in our witness, and in all that we do. May we be able to say from the heart *all that thrills my soul of Jesus. He is more than life to me. And the fairest of 10,000 in my precious Lord I see!*