

1 PETER 2:9-10

Coming to the Precious Cornerstone – Part 3

(2:9-10) *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. (ESV)*

There is a lot to be chewed on here, much more than we are going to be able to handle in our short time together tonight. So, in an effort to keep our eyes locked on the forest and not lose sight of it behind any of the several huge trees standing in this text, I want to lay out the main idea of 2:9-10 before you so that you can continue going back to it even as you take time looking at some of the bigger dilemmas surrounding it. The main idea is this:

Christians owe every ounce of credit for their salvation to God Himself and have been saved so that they will proclaim to God to everyone else how truly great He is!

That's the point of these 2 verses. In the midst of all the debate (which is sometimes very heated) God gets the credit for our salvation, which He has given to us with the intention that it will result in speech that exalts Him in worship and in sharing the Gospel. Let's read together to try to begin getting a good feel for what Peter is getting at here.

**THE KEY TO 2:9-10:
But you... (2:9a – ESV)**

Keep in mind what Peter just got done saying in 2:4-8. He has just told us that as we genuinely worship together seeking Christ for spiritual nourishment (*As you come to him...*), that God is making us into the place where His Spirit is most active (*...you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house...*) and in effect is making us a community of people who spend their lives worshipping God and meeting the needs of one another (*...to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*) So, as we seek to meet with Christ together we are being developed by God into a community of people who love Him and love one another with passion and intensity and authenticity.

Then in 2:6-8 he gives the OT basis for what He has just said, making it clear that the life he just described (one of coming to Christ for intimate fellowship with the body and being made into a community of servants and ministers) is the only life worth living that exists (*So the honor is for you who believe...*), unlike the life of the unbeliever (*...but for those who do not believe...*) who because of his rejection of Christ is destined (those unbelievers who will persist in unbelief until their death) for complete ruin and judgment. The unbeliever who will persist in unbelief his entire life is being prepared by God in a very real sense for the day he faces eternal judgment, so that as he is tormented and punished for the rest of eternity, he will have no one to blame but himself.

What if God, desiring to make his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory... (Romans 9:22-23 – ESV)

The Lord has made (or prepared) everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble. (Proverbs 16:4 – ESV)

What a fearful thing. The unbeliever is destined for judgment, as it is the only place that unbelief ever leads. If he persists in unbelief, he will “stumble” (or fall down or be brought to ruin) over the “stone” (Christ) whom he has tried so hard to deny and face eternal judgment. Now look at verse 9.

But you... In other words; “This is not the case for you who believe in Christ.” Your destiny has nothing to do with judgment. God has something completely different in store for you. But what is that something???

Before Peter answers that question, he wants to remind his readers of who and what they are. *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession... 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.*

THE CONTEXT; BOTH IMMEDIATE AND REMOTE:

Tonight, we are coming to a close on the first of 3 major sections in 1 Peter. To this point, Peter has been stacking up right before our eyes the enormous privileges we get to enjoy as followers of Christ (a living hope; joy inexpressible and fully of glory; getting to see God’s plan of salvation worked out before our eyes which the prophets of the past and angels to this day just long to experience for themselves), as well as the kind of responsibilities that come with those privileges (personal holiness; the fear of the Lord; genuine love and purity), and from 2:4 on has been showing us what exactly God’s goal is in giving us such a great salvation (to make a holy priesthood – a community of people who will make it their business to worship Him and minister to the needs of His people). Then at the end of this section, he revisits God’s goal in our salvation and uses some really strong language; language that would only be used to make a very powerful point.

See if these passages sound familiar.

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all 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. (Exodus 19:5-6 – ESV)

The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise. (Isaiah 43:20-21 – ESV)

These are the words that Peter taps into to describe our true identity as Christians and to remind us of God’s ultimate purpose in saving us. That deserves some serious thought. Peter applies language that in the OT applied to the Jewish people, now to people who believe in Jesus Christ. Let’s look at a couple other OT texts that show God’s affection for Israel to help us grasp what Peter is really saying here.

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his own treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD

has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 7:6-8 – ESV)

Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are to this day. (Deuteronomy 10:15 – ESV)

All throughout the OT you see the story of a God who loves His people beyond fully comprehension, such that He would rescue them from the bondage of slavery to a ruthless ruler; such that He would provide food for them even when they begin to doubt His faithfulness to them; such that He would hand over armies to them so that they might take hold of the land He had promised to them years before; such that He would plead with them through prophet after prophet to return to Him so that they might escape His judgment; such that He would send His Son to be the King that they had been longing for, knowing that they would reject Him; such that even to this day, He remains committed to bring many of them back to Himself through their allegiance to the King that they had once killed. You want to know what love is. Look at the love of God for His people Israel, who out of all the nations of the world He chose to be His own and is faithful to, to this day!

This is the same love He has set on believers in Christ, but not as if He has replaced Israel. God to this day remains committed to the Jewish people, and has a plan to bring many of them to belief in their Messiah (Romans 11:25-29). Peter's point here is simply that God has now expanded the object of His affection to now include all who will believe in the Messiah, both Jew and Gentile.

You say, what does this have to do with anything? Put this in the context of our verses. Some people in this world are being prepared for eternal judgment due to their persistent unbelief. But you and I get to benefit from God's rich and mysterious and powerful love, which in light of the fact that many people (and in fact most people) do not get to enjoy this love, ought to fill our hearts with a deep sense of privilege and gratitude and a deep rooted awe and amazement of God.

Note then the kindness and severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided that you continue in His kindness. (Romans 11:22 – ESV)

I can only echo Paul's prayer for myself and for all of you.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith – that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-19 – ESV)

Just a bird's eye view of this text should spring up within us to an unspeakable amazement that God would choose to set His eternal and unbreakable love and faithfulness that once was limited to Israel now to us. Who are we that we should benefit from His love? Again the main idea of this passage:

Christians owe every ounce of credit for their salvation to God Himself and have been saved so that they will proclaim to God and to everyone else how truly great He is!

WHO ARE WE? WHAT EXACTLY DOES PETER SAY ABOUT US?

Let's take a look at what Peter specifically says about us.

1. *You are a chosen race...* (2:9a)

This goes back all the way to verse 1, where Peter called His readers “elect exiles”. They (and we) have been chosen according to God’s foreordained plan to lavish His covenantal love (which Israel once exclusively received) upon them (and us). That is what defines them as a “race”. They are not a race because they are a particular color or because they have specific facial features or because they were born in a particular country; they are a race because God has chosen each of them, according to His plan to lavish His covenantal love upon them (...*according to the foreknowledge of God...*), by means of the Holy Spirit making them people set apart for His purposes (...*in the sanctification of the Spirit...*), which results in being obedient to Jesus Christ and being made clean by His sacrifice (...*for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.*).

Believers must never lose sight of this fact. The only reason we can point to for our salvation, is God and His grace.

2. *You are a royal priesthood...* (2:9b)

As we have discussed, this means that we are group of people who like the priests in the OT, have direct access to the presence of God and the responsibility to minister to one another. But we are also a “royal priesthood” meaning we belong to a King and serve as priests to further the reputation of our King.

3. *You are a holy nation...* (2:9c)

This means that we are a group of people who are to be set apart (holy) in 3 ways, like God Himself.

- Set apart from the rest of the world (be different).
- Set apart from all evil; having nothing to do with it.
- Set apart for God’s own glory; living to further His reputation and not our own.

4. *You are a people for His own possession...* (2:9d)

We are a people who are here to serve Him and live for Him. We are His and must go where He calls and do what He commands. We are His own possession, called out to live for Him.

5. *You have been called out of darkness and into His marvelous light...* (2:9e)

Again, our conversion is merely our response to His sovereign call. He has brought us out of darkness, which we could not in any way have found our way out on our own. He has granted us the privilege of casting light on the truth that we might see it and love it for what it is.

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6 – ESV)

6. *Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people...* (2:10a)

These words are taken from Hosea 2:23, where God promises His mercy to Israel in spite of their rebellion against Him. He promises to remain faithful and bring them back to Himself. This is exactly what He has done for us. We who before God's saving purposes were worked out in our lives were lost and scattered and ignorant and merely individuals; we have been made into the only group of people who will enjoy the massive privilege of living with God in eternity in the New World. Once we had nothing that would distinguish us from the rest of the world. But now, because of God's saving purposes, we have identity and purpose and a future!

7. *Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy... (2:10b)*

The idea is very much the same in this statement. Before God brought us to our spiritual senses, we had not fully benefited from His great and awesome kindness that only His people can truly know. But now, as those who believe, we know His unfathomable kindness on a daily basis, no matter what kind of hardships or trials or sufferings we face. We are daily the recipients of God's awesome kindness simply because we His.

The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin... (Exodus 34:6-7a – ESV)

For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. (Psalm 84:10-11 – ESV)

This is who we are. A chosen race. A royal priesthood. A holy nation. A people for God's own possession. A people called out of darkness and into His marvelous light. A people who once were not a people. A people who daily experience the kindness of God. This tells you a lot about who we are. But it tells us more about who He is.

If we are chosen, it means He is gracious. If we are His priests, it means He is a King deserving of worship. If we are a holy nation, it means He is a holy God. If we are His own possession, it means He owns everything. If we have been called out of darkness, it means He is faithful even to those who oppose Him. If we are now a people after having not been a people, it means He is able to unify a people who once lived only for themselves. And if we now receive mercy, it means He has mercy to give and gives it freely. No wonder, the purpose of Him granting us salvation is as Peter says...

THE GOAL OF OUR SALVATION:

...to proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light. (2:9b – ESV)

Now we come full circle, back to the main point of these 2 verses.

Christians owe every ounce of credit for their salvation to God Himself and have been saved so that they will proclaim to God and to everyone else how truly great He is!

The bottom line is this: We have been saved, so that we will put our Savior on display. We can do this in worship services with singing and prayer and preaching. We can do it as we all sit in a living room talking about what the Lord has been for us over the course of the past week. We can do it as we talk with unbelievers about the greatness

of our God, challenging them to trust in Him and to worship Him. We can do in our homes or at our jobs or at the grocery store or the bank or at McDonalds.

But do it we must. We must proclaim that He is gracious and that He is a King deserving of worship and that He is a holy God and that He owns everything and that He is faithful even to His enemies and that He is so powerful He can unify a group of people under one common purpose who had once lived only for themselves and that He has mercy to give and that He gives it freely. This is the earthly goal of our salvation; that we will proclaim back to Him and out to the world that He is great and mighty and strong to save.

Christians owe every ounce of credit for their salvation to God Himself and have been saved so that they will proclaim to God and to everyone else how truly great He is!

That wraps up the first major section in 1 Peter, but if you're like me, you are left with a question; "But what does this look like?" That's a good question. That's the question Peter deals with next. And so will we. But until then, let's "proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light!"